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Mistress Content Cradock

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"As he stood by her side, holding the burning brand."

Mistress Content Cradock

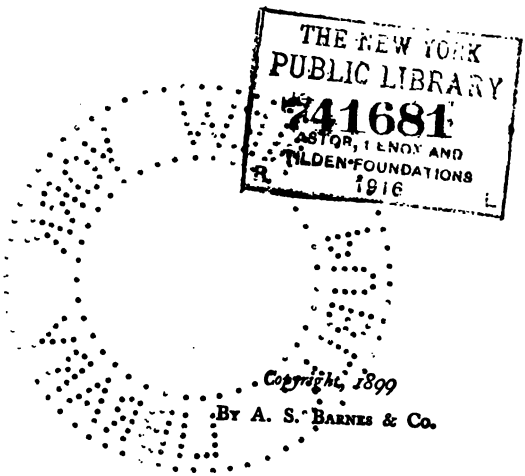
BY

ANNIE ELIOT TRUMBULL

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES COPELAND

"They steered by stars the elder shipmen knew,
And laid their courses where the currents draw
Of ancient wisdom channelled deep in law,
The undaunted few
Who changed the Old World for the New."

NEW YORK
A. S. BARNES AND COMPANY
1899



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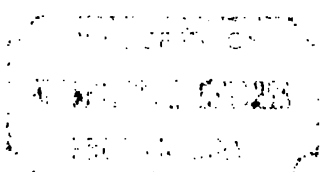

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TO

The Memory of my Father

JAMES HAMMOND TRUMBULL

WHOSE UNFAILING INTEREST IN THE EARLY HISTORY
OF NEW ENGLAND WAS NOT ONLY TEMPERED
BY ENTHUSIASM BUT LEAVENED
BY KNOWLEDGE

17981

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Mistress Content Cradock

CHAPTER I

"One of the few that have a right to rank
With the true Makers."

"Love asks no evidence
To prove itself well placed."

THERE was a wayward softness mingled with the salt breath of the sea as it sighed over the flats that lay along the river-side, but the melting snow had left enough of its chill in the air to make this caressing warmth a suggestion rather than a presence. Even in the sunlight, a certain mistiness hung over the distant water like the veil of Spring which the laughing Summer would soon push aside.

The spire of the church and the smoke of chimneys rose from the town that clustered about the river's mouth, and now and then floated from its streets the sound of martial music, but in a solemn cadence which denoted that the strife was over and that there remained only rest. Content bent her head to catch the

rhythmic beats as they came fitfully to her ears. The door-yards about were empty, the dust settled undisturbed on the highway in front of her; everybody but herself had gone to the town yonder. It was a day of sorrow, yet of the subdued glory of a final consummation, — the day of the funeral of John Winthrop, late governor of the Colony of Massachusetts.

It had been a long afternoon, notwithstanding the work that had been left to Content to do. The days had, in reality, grown longer, and with the relaxation of all the cares that had made the hard winter one constant struggle against cold and privation, had come a slight loosening of the bonds that held her and others to the daily tasks of labor and discipline. It was in the very air, the sweetness of this unrestraint, and in unconscious yielding to its influence, Content had left her wheel in the midst of her spinning, and loitered at the door to catch the warmth of the sunlight and the rise and fall of the distant strains. But the reproach, never far, in those days, from a voluntary idleness, soon drew her back into the raftered living room. Why should she feel this vague lightness of spirit, this unfounded happiness, when she should be sighing under the

heaviness of the hand of God, to whom it had seemed good to take from the colony a high tower and a strong fortress, a bulwark and a defender! For it was a mighty man of Israel that lay dead in their midst. Who so wise at the helm, so far-seeing in council, so moderate in controversy, as his Excellency John Winthrop? Words of eulogy and of apprehension for the future floated through her mind; she had heard them often during the six days that had elapsed since the news of his death awoke the public grief. The musical whir of the flaxwheel, the occasional optimistic song of a robin, the barking of a neighbor's dog which was chasing a neighbor's cat with a racial enthusiasm untempered by the Puritan atmosphere, were almost the only sounds that broke the stillness of the April afternoon as it grew on to its close.

The sound of trumpet and fife had long died away altogether, and the shadows had fallen across the fields, when Content rose again from her wheel, put away her work, and, glancing at the Dutch clock in the corner, went into a shed opening out of the room, returning in a moment with a log of wood the weight of which was all that she could easily sustain.

As she crossed the large room, whose corners had grown a little obscure, to the broad hearth where the fire was lower but glowing still, without a preliminary knock the outside door opened and a man stood on the threshold. Behind him, the last rays of the western sun threw his figure into prominence but rendered his face almost invisible to Content as she paused in the middle of the room, while they fell caressingly upon her slenderness, and the severe simplicity of her gray gown and white neckerchief. She had turned up this gray gown that it might not be injured by contact with the wood-pile, and the snowy petticoat showed underneath it; her strong young arms clasped the rough bark of the hewn wood, and her large, thick-lashed, blue eyes, which were always unusually wide open, giving her habitually an almost startled expression at variance with the calmness of her demeanor, were fixed upon the entering stranger. Beyond him, just outside of the door, was another figure, that of a younger man, his features too in a half shadow, from which he gazed, with a sudden thrill of emotion, at the fair vision of the girl. There was a moment's pause, due to the surprise of all three, and then the older visitor

bowed low, and said in a musical voice, and with a singularly distinct and almost studied enunciation: "Pardon, young Mistress Cradock, — for I perceive by a certain air and resemblance not to be belied that it is to her I speak, — but ere I go further in apology, let me relieve thee of thy burden!" and he stepped quickly forward. "It is the immediate wrong that should be the first righted, after all," he added, as he took the heavy log from her arms with a courtliness that bespoke familiarity with a world larger than that of the colony. The younger man had come hastily nearer, as if he, too, would be of assistance, but the other put him aside.

"Nay, nay," he said, "I am thy elder, and should be the earlier in a service that has its rewards. In truth," he went on to Content, "the April evening hath a chill that makes the replenishing of a fire a grateful task to even a weary wayfarer," and, bending over, he laid the log within the red glow of the chimney place. As he did so, the leaping flame lighted up his face with sudden brilliancy, and Content marked for the first time what manner of man he was who had thus entered unannounced. He was of about fifty years of age,

with strong well-moulded features, keen eyes with a restless light in their depths, a deep frown between the heavy eyebrows, thick hair streaked with gray, and certain lines about the eyes and mouth which might denote qualities at odds with peace and serenity. But the mouth was fine, and the smile that hovered about it, as he stood upright and turned to Content, was very sweet. Again his face withdrew into partial shadow, though the fire-light leaped up and flickered over all three of the figures, but it was as if in that instant in which he had bent over the red heart of the flame, the human being had been suddenly revealed to the watching eye, and, instinctively, Content felt that she had read his character then, and that she trusted it.

"And now," he said, "for my apology in thus entering unbidden and *sans façon*, as they say across the water, — it is only that thy father's latch-string hath been out for me according to his own assurance for many years, though certain circumstances have prevented my taking advantage of it as often as I would," — he spoke with a half smile, — "and that meeting him to-day yonder in the town, he bade me enter his house as if it were my own,

but failed to warn me that it was guarded by his daughter — whom thus I ran a risk of frighting by my impetuousness. But I warrant me," and he glanced at her keenly, "he was not so heedless as at first I was inclined to believe; it is borne in upon me that she be not of the frighting sort."

Content had not moved since the entrance of the strangers, save to drop her turned up gown, and smooth, not hurriedly, her muslin cuffs and kerchief, somewhat rumpled by her errand. Now she spoke in a sweet, full voice and with a grave dignity that twenty years do not always bear with them.

"Methinks, sir, it were wonderfully poor discretion," she said, "if a maiden were frighted by a friend of her father, whose first word was one of courtesy. Let me make you as welcome as may be until my father and mother return, who shall do it after a more fitting manner," and she moved a high-backed chair forward into the warmth of the fire and took down from the high shelf a brass candlestick. All this time the younger man had stood aside, his hat in his hand, his long cloak caught up over his arm, without apparent shyness, but waiting modestly till his companion

should make him known, his eyes fixed always on the flower-like fairness of Mistress Content. Now the other turned towards him.

"This," he said, "is my young friend Resolved Archer, late of Plymouth Colony, young in years but not in friendship," — his sweet smile rested for a moment on his lips, — "who has come with me at some personal risk and inconvenience. I commend him to your esteem, young Mistress Cradock."

"I bid him welcome," said Content, with an extreme gravity; "the friends of my father's friends have ever a place at his hearthstone."

"I thank thee, Mistress Cradock," said the young man, bowing low, and speaking with deep respect, "and I hope for a time when I may be welcome as thy friend — rather than as another's — proud as I am of being thus presented by him who brought me hither."

The older man had seated himself, as if weary, in the proffered chair, and as the smile left his lips they settled into curves which lacked softness and grew almost forbidding.

Mistress Content, with the slightest possible flush, stooped to pick up a splinter of wood to light her candle; but Archer had forestalled her, and now, as he stood by her side holding

the burning brand to the somewhat reticent wick, Content was conscious of what might have grown into an alarming confusion, had she not recognized and dismissed it in time. He was very tall, and the little torch in his hand illuminated his face as the firelight had done the other in a way to bring out a hint of resemblance between them and to exaggerate it. He had the same resolute chin, keen eyes, and youthful intensity of expression; but the restlessness was not there, nor the marks which told of contest. Just now his eyes wandered from the immediate business of the moment to the warm pallor of Content's cheek, her soft uncurled hair, and the dark lashes and white lids, which were all that he could see of the demurely drooped eyes. It was but a moment that the two stood thus. The stranger at the hearth sighed and looked up; the candle-wick caught, and the brand was tossed back into the flame. Content lighted a second candle and placed one on the table by the window.

"And further," said the older man,—neither of the visitors seemed to have noticed that he had not given his own name, but Content wondered somewhat,—"if I were quite open with you — and that I would be, God willing,

with all mankind — I would say to you that there is something joyful to the natural heart of a man who is homeless hereabouts, in entering a home, unbidden, as though it were his own; in pleasing himself with the fancy that he is again at home in this favored colony."

He rose and walked to the window, and looked out at the sunset. There was a deep sadness in the gaze that passed from the gray marshes, and the flat lands, with their little pools here and there catching the light from the kindled sky, to the twinkling lights of the town beyond.

"It is a great man that was buried to-day," he said abruptly, turning back into the room; "that hath joined the church triumphant, and left the church militant — the ranks militant, I would say!" he spoke with sudden fire, "since a church is something limited and walled in, and an army is like a sea and may cover the land! He was a great man," he added more quietly, "and he is dead; and though there be spiritual sons of Anak with us still, we are but a few people and this is a new country;" his voice fell into momentary sadness and then rose with startling force, as he stepped forward and laid his hand upon

Archer's shoulder, "wherefore it becometh us to fight — to fight that we may possess!" he exclaimed; "to withstand, to repel, to be clothed with armor, to carry the shield, to wear the helmet of salvation, and bear the sword of the spirit —" he paused.

"And to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," said Content, in low, thrilled tones, her starry eyes fixed on his with a divine enthusiasm. She was moved, stirred, exalted by the fervor of the man, and spoke almost involuntarily.

His glance fell on her with burning intensity; he threw his head back with a gesture almost of anger, caught his breath to speak, and then paused suddenly, while the deep glow of his eyes grew brighter and the stern lines of his mouth relaxed as he looked at her in her sweet, soft-hued beauty, but with something indomitable after all in the clear note of her security.

"Maiden," he began with vibrating voice, — but again the current of speech was diverted, for, a second time, the outer door swung open and Cradock and his wife hastily entered the room.

"I did think," said the Puritan householder,

as he stepped forward with hand outstretched, "that should the Lord lead him ever again across this threshold, my voice should be the first to give a welcome to Roger Williams!"

Content looked from her father to his guest in quick surprise, shadowed by apprehension. Was this that disturber of the peace, that stumbling block and cause of offence, who yet was dear to the hearts of the best men of the colony? And what was it she had said to him? As further greetings took place and a younger child came quietly in and shyly made his obeisance to the distinguished stranger, a wave of confusion covered her as she recalled her own words and the peculiar significance of their application to this man. She could hardly raise her eyes when he turned to her with a smile which hinted at a complete understanding of her embarrassment, as he said, —

"I have had a foretaste of thy welcome, friend Cradock, in the readiness of thy daughter to admit us to the warmth of thy hearthstone. Methinks her disposition savors somewhat of thine own in a readiness to turn theory into practice."

The Puritan turned a sharp glance of inquiry ready to become reproof upon his daughter.

"Nay, nay," went on Roger Williams, quickly, "I said it but by way of commendation. Her way has been that of pleasantness and her words of peace."

It was his smile, rather than his words, that Content answered as she said, still flushing, but with a gleam in her eyes not unlike his own.

"And the worshipful Mr. Williams hath been ever ready to let his hearers make their own application without fear of punishment for their boldness." Smiling, but half frightened by her own temerity, changed suddenly from the thrilled, half unconscious speaker of sacredly cherished truth, to a bright-eyed, daring girl thinking only of the present moment, still, nevertheless, there was audible in her low voice that note of bravery, hinting, as before, of something deep and unconquerable.

With her last words she turned aside and slipped out of the room to rejoin her mother, who was busy in preparation for the evening meal. Young Archer stepped forward as if to follow her, but then, conscious of his own indiscretion, drew aside to the chimney corner, that he might not hinder the conversation of his seniors. Cradock shook his head as the

gown of his daughter fluttered through the doorway.

"She hath a quick wit, and I fear one not always duly restrained by grace," he said, gravely. "I hope she hath in nothing forgotten her reverence to thee and her humble duty."

"She hath forgotten nothing that she should remember," said Roger Williams, smiling still. "And if thou hast naught to lament in her but a quick wit, be careful how thou dost discipline her therefor; it hath never threatened, methinks, to become too common a disorder."

"But we are not together to speak of a maid's wilfulness!" exclaimed Cradock. "How is it with thee in thy colony of Providence, and how think you it shall be with us now that the head of our Commonwealth hath been called to go hence?"

"As for thy first question, which it is more my part to answer; God hath blessed us in our endeavors, that thou knowest. He has granted to me to provide a shelter indeed for them of distressed conscience, and in many differences of opinion and in some contention, we seek to follow His will as it is declared unto us by the consciences of His people."

"And is it not difficult to keep peace in

your borders? Doth not the law of the members war often against the law of the body politic?" asked Cradock, looking keenly at his guest.

Williams answered his look with a half smiling, half melancholy shake of the head.

"You here in the Bay be inclined to make overmuch of our contentions," he answered. "And if we have contention, is it not better than persecution? And is it the peace of the Lord that saith to my brother, 'Upon me is the spirit of truth, and it hath passed you by—wherefore get thee out from among us that I punish thee not!'"

Cradock rose and paced before the fire, not restlessly, but in the stern thoughtfulness that was so often the mood of these early warriors for spiritual victories, seeking for the right word and the word in season. Roger Williams leaned back in his chair, his fine head resting on the high carven back, his dark eyes with their subtle fire, following the tall figure of the Puritan as he moved to and fro. Archer sat quietly by, as befitted a young man in the company of his elders, attentive to the matter in hand, but not inattentive to the possible re-entrance of Mistress Content.

Upon the faces and figures of the three men, the fire, now a greedy blaze, threw its fickle dancing illumination. It was as if the spirit of controversy fluttered forth from its always adjacent abiding place.

"But have we not had enough of contention?" demanded Cradock, at last, with a certain severity. "Shall we come here to live in a continual ferment, — a storm that threatens the very existence of our vineyard that the hand of the Lord hath planted, and that we have watered with our tears? Let us abide by the law!"

"Yea, verily, — the law of righteousness. Is it by the law of righteousness that ye take the land from those who hunted and fished it, while you and I studied the law of men in another country that we called our own? And is it peace that you have taught the children of the wilderness?"

Archer glanced at the speaker with tender admiration, and made as if to break his silence, but checked himself, and turned again to the fire. The Puritan paused in his measured walk, and, resting his hand on the back of the wooden settle, looked across at his guest.

"Why do I seek to show thee thy error?"

he said, with a slight relaxing of the sternness of his features; "though that thou art in error, I plainly perceive. Wiser men than I have dealt with thee to no purpose. And thou hast a certain measure in thy discourse and a spirit that is at variance with thy precepts, that taketh the words out of the mouth of a man who hath thirsted for thy bodily presence, and hath mourned openly the day that the secular welfare of this commonwealth made thee an exile from its borders!" His voice shook with controlled feeling; there was a pathos in the tenderness underlying the unyielded convictions of his faith that was not lost on either of the listeners. Archer's eyes shone with the enthusiasm of his youth, as he looked up at the tall, grave man whose great stature and massive features made him seem literally an upholder of the public weal.

Williams sprang from his chair. "And I," he said in his deep, sweet voice, laying his hand on the other's arm, "who have sought thy doorway, as the weary hart the waterbrook, for the love I bear thee — thou, who art as my brother, do I not hear in thy speech again the word that hath ever to my ears seemed good, though it fitted not with my intention or my

firm conviction?" For a moment there was utter quiet as the two men looked into each other's eyes, shoulder to shoulder, as they had stood often in years past. It was a moment of revelation of the intense feeling that burned so brightly under the frozen exterior of the Puritan existence, and it now sought no further expression than that long mutual gaze. As if ashamed of the unusual emotion, they turned abruptly from each other, as Mistress Cradock and her daughter entered to lay the supper-table, followed by a servant bearing the cold joint and a pitcher of ale.

CHAPTER II

"Here were men (co-equal with their fate)
Who did great things, unconscious they were great."

"Is love learned only out of poet's books?"

"IT is small wonder he hath friends — that I can see with my own eyes," said Content, "and, as I have heard, friends among those who sit at meat with rulers, as well as those to whom he hath offered shelter and an unmolested life. How should a man of his walk and conversation not have friends!" she added warmly. "Even our little Timothy, who is somewhat averse to strangers," and she laughed, "hath declared himself on the side of his elders and betters. But —" and she paused.

"But how is it, you would ask, Mistress Content," said her companion, "that he is a man not welcomed in council, nor bidden to sit in judgment even by those who love him hereabouts, but rather exiled and counted irreconcilable and seditious."

"Yes," she answered gravely, "were it fitting that my inexperience assumed the position of questioner, that is what I would ask."

They were walking along one of the paths winding through the marshes down to the sandy shore. The weather had changed during the night, and, with the fitfulness of the climate, the softness that had hung about timidly the day before, was relegated to its proper place in the later year, and a light fall of snow had come to confirm yesterday's uneasy consciousness of premature enjoyment. But the appearance of the snow was decidedly patchy to-day. Across the flat stretches of country were browns and grays that were far removed from the white unbroken solemnity of winter. Here and there, an up-and-doing farmer had turned some of the earth, warmed by two or three days of sunshine, and its rich brown marked the poverty of the frayed garment of the spring snow. The occasional half-frozen pools, which the night before had gleamed frostily, were gray and still; piles of straw of a pale tan-color stood here and there; and the clumps of woodland in the distance were of another gray, blue in tone and misty against the sky. A line of stone

wall, the result of long and hard labor, cut across the country with a coldness of hue severer than that of the snow itself.

"It is a hard question for one that loves him to answer," said Archer, thoughtfully, "as thy father hath doubtless found it before now — for that he loves him, none can doubt. Perhaps he is one of those men who must be, verily, a law unto himself — "

"And will submit only to those laws himself hath made?" asked Content, with a gleam of decorous mischief in her starry eyes.

"Nay, nay; for in our colony there of Providence, there is a justice, yes, and an equity, administered according to laws that are not of one individual, but unchanging and universal — but — but — there be those, thou knowest, who, knowing a right, will yet sit down under a wrong and call it expediency — and Master Roger Williams is none of that race — "

"And is my father? And was Governor Winthrop? And is the young Governor Winthrop, his son? Are they, and many more, of those that sit down under a wrong and call it expediency?" There was a visible hint of contumacy in the turn of her head as

she looked up at the tall young Puritan at her side. "Why did they, then, not stay in England, and abide by laws that they knew were iniquitous, and worship as they were bidden by false prophets?" she demanded. Archer began to question the wisdom of his embarkation upon the sea of argument.

"I said not so, Mistress Content," he declared, somewhat bluntly; "and it is a wilful misconstruction that findeth such irreverence in my words —"

"It is ever another's will that maketh a man wilful, never one's own." He looked at her askance. She was very grave, and her profile, framed in her gray hood, was almost severe; but her mouth trembled a little as if it were not quite safely beyond the jurisdiction of mirth.

He felt instinctively the danger of being diverted to the personal, and continued, "But a man must live according to his conscience, and is it to live by other people's consciences that Mr. Williams has escaped from the tyrant Charles and the oppressor Laud?"

Content was somewhat impressed, and Archer pursued his advantage with a certain apprehension that it might at any period slip from his

grasp. "'Worship as they were bidden,' they are your own words; and why should not a man worship here as seemeth to him good, since it was to seek that privilege that he came to this new country?"

"But if there be no agreement whatsoever as to what may be worship and law, will it not soon be the end of all worship and law together?" asked Content, with deceptive candor. "Methinks were all men like thy Master Roger Williams in freedom of controversy, it would be a difficult thing to gather together even the two or three in the name of Him who hath commanded it."

Archer, somewhat unprepared for this application of liberty of thought, was the more at a loss for a reply in that he had not always been able to shut his eyes to the difficulties that lay in the way of the consistent administration of his leader's theories.

They had drawn near to a small low house on the shore which was the object of their walk, and to Content's companion it did not seem an unfortunate time for the interruption, when she prevented his reply with the words, "I will go within and obtain the simples for my mother; I cannot bid you come with me,

having not Mistress Salome's permission; if it pleasure you, do you wait for me without, or leave me here, and walk on to meet my father. I have no fear in returning were the dusk nearer than it is."

"I will wait, Mistress Content," said Archer, bowing as she entered the low doorway.

The building consisted of but one room, raftered, and containing no articles of furniture, save those demanded by the simplest living, with the exception of a spinning wheel. From the rafters hung the usual supplies of a woman reputed wise in the properties of nature's remedies,— bunches of dried herbs whose faint, pungent, and aromatic scent imparted to the place a suggestion of the exotic which was singularly appropriate to the owner of the house, who turned her head quickly as Content came in. Hers was not the shrewd and wrinkled face naturally associated with the gatherer of simples or the prescriber of ancient remedies. She was a woman still young, though not perhaps far from middle age, tall and straight, with a regularity of feature and impassiveness of expression that was not unlike the level-lidded mystery of the Egyptian type. A brilliant red scarf about her shoul-

ders added to the oriental suggestion, and its color had the effect of a defiance, so vivid it was amid the colorlessness of the neutral harmonies of the New England environment.

"Content Cradock," she said by way of greeting as she stopped the whir of the wheel, but kept her foot on the treadle.

"Yes, Mistress Salome," said Content; "and I am come for the syrup that you promised my mother a week agone, that will cure a cough."

Salome rose and crossed the room to a small corner cupboard; she moved with a slow grace that held in its quietness a subtle indication of control, as if the swiftness of an arrow shot from the bow would have been easier for her.

"Roger Williams is thy guest," she said as she opened the door of the cupboard.

"Yes," assented Content; "but who brought thee the news?"

She was surprised, for not only was Salome's little house distant from the highway, but the announcement of the distinguished man's visit had been withheld. Salome smiled.

"There are voices," she said, indifferently,

"that one hears the more clearly that one is far from the hum of the market-place."

Content questioned no further; she had learned before that Salome had often unguessed sources of information, though she affected no special airs of mystery, and, save that she lived solitary in a lonely place, her mode of life was not conspicuously unlike that of her neighbors. It was the woman herself that gave the hint of inscrutability, and of a certain intensity at variance with her surroundings, not what she did, nor always what she said.

"Hath he spoken of his visit to England?" she asked, "and of what he did there?" Though she spoke indifferently still, a close observer might have seen that she listened for the answer.

"I have not heard him," said Content, as she stood in the middle of the room, her hand on the high back of a rush-bottomed chair; "but surely all men know what he did there, and how his grateful colony prize his services."

"Yes," assented the other, without impatience; "but he may have done and heard things, after all, which neither you, nor I, nor his grateful colony wot of, that yet might

come out in friendly converse. I would like to hear him speak," she went on; "he hath a singular charm, though for Zion's sake will he not hold his peace, and," she smiled slightly, "to the discomfiture of the elect, he buildeth a Zion upon every little hill."

"There be some of the elect that be not discomfited," asserted Content, somewhat scandalized by this freedom of speech.

"Yes, yes, and notably that one who waiteth for thee without and whose voice, after all, speaketh things fitter for thine ears than perhaps the tongues of wiser men." Involuntarily Content glanced out of the window towards which not once had Salome turned in her movements about the room, and which had been directly behind her as she sat at her wheel when Content had opened the door. Even now, Archer was not visible through the imperfect panes of glass. Salome saw the glance and the tinge of color in the clearness of the girl's pale cheek.

"Nay, child," she said, still smiling, "do not feel called upon to reprove my lightness, — thy rebuke is as if it were said, and I, Salome, have heard it all before; but take this pannikin in thy basket, and if it do not ease the

cough, say that I am not the wise woman thy heart bids thee believe," and with nothing further by way of farewell, she reseated herself at her wheel, turning her back on Content, who, not unused to her manner, went quietly out of the door, the whir of the wheel mingling with the soft lapping of the water on the sandy shore and emphasizing the silence of the lonely place, where, it seemed, truly, a quick ear might catch the drift of messages drowned in the louder utterances of mankind. Archer, who had wandered close down to the water's edge, turned as he heard the sound of the latch, and came quickly towards her. The clouds had grown more opaque than they had been earlier in the afternoon, and, now that the sun was setting, they took upon their soft silver, which would grow hard steel by and by, a faint pearly pink, cold, still, pale, and evanescent. The water was like the gray above it, save that it was ruffled a little, disturbed to a point just rougher than the perfect smoothness of the sky. As they walked on together towards home, the pink deepened to a transient copper color, but so delicate that it was not metallic, and then, gradually, the browns and blues faded all into a blur of slate color and white.

The flush that had stolen into Content's fair cheek under Salome's comments still kept its place, and her manner had acquired an added shade of reserve which perplexed young Archer, and made it difficult for him to break the silence that seemed to have fallen upon them through her design. He began to feel that to be worsted in argument was better than to be left in undisturbed possession of possibly mistaken theories.

"And would Mistress Salome — as I think you called her — not admit me into her dwelling?" he asked, rather awkwardly, at last. Content started a little.

"I did not ask her," she said simply. "It may be that I was wanting in courtesy that I did not; but my errand was a brief one, and —"

"And there is no hardship in waiting even for thee, Mistress Content, when a man can stand by the salt water and look out into it, thinking his own thoughts," went on Archer readily, as she hesitated, "at least so it seems to one who has grown up beside it."

Content smiled, pleased by the answer. "So it seems to me too," she replied. "But I was about to say that Mistress Salome knew of thy presence, and as she dismissed me, rather than invited, I took my leave when it was

well nigh offered me —" and she laughed a little.

"Ah, if she saw me alone without the door of her house and proffered me no asylum therein, then I may be sure I found no favor —" he said lightly.

"I did not say that she saw thee —" and Content was silent a moment, as she trod the narrow footway, her camlet cloak brushing against Archer's as he strode along the rougher ground by her side. Something in her tone made him look at her curiously.

"And how knew she then?" he asked.

"That you must ask a wiser than I," answered Content, with a certain seriousness. "And though you need not go far to find such an one to ask, methinks you will not easily find one that will give you an answer."

"And how if I ask Mistress Salome herself?"

"That I would not do, though she be a wise woman." Content spoke quickly, with what might have been a shade of apprehension.

"Believe me, Mistress Content," said Archer, with smiling courtesy, "I have no inclination to look further for wisdom to-day, nor to-morrow, nor yet the day after that."

Content shook her head with severity. "'Wisdom is the principal thing,'" she said: "'therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.'"

The old words had a pretty, inconsistent, didactic charm, falling from the sweet curves of her lips.

"Well," he rejoined, "if in the multitude of counsellors there be greater safety than in thy admonitions alone, I have not far to seek a refuge — look beyond."

They were at the point where the wandering path branched from the highway, and coming towards them upon the latter, dimly discernible in the twilight, were three tall figures, all carrying in their manner and bearing that subtle mark of distinction that is seldom misleading, and with them a child, tramping sturdily along with short legs that were being inured to the stately strides of the pioneers of civilization. Two of the men, draped in the long cloaks which gave dignity to even inferior forms, and wearing the broad, high hats of the Puritan, which added to their stature, were Roger Williams and Cradock.

"Who is their companion — he of the tawny coat?" asked Archer. As Content looked

intently down the road, the stranger raised his head so that the waning light made its outline more clear, and swept his hand towards the distant horizon, as though including, in what might have been a gesture of appeal, the scene of low lying farms and flat marshes, letting it fall at his side again with a suddenness that made the motion dramatic.

Evidently there was something characteristic in the little manifestation, for Content exclaimed, —

"Yes, it is he! it is the godly Mr. Eliot, the pastor of Roxbury, who spends much of his life among yon poor heathen whom we seek to befriend, but who, alas! have as many complaints against us, and we against them, as though we could never be aught but declared enemies. But Mr. Eliot neither they nor we can misunderstand."

The three men drew nearer, and the two small groups met, and after a word or two of greeting, went on their way together, the diminutive Timothy letting go the hand of Roger Williams to join his sister and her companion, who fell, as befitted them, in the rear of their elders. Timothy was somewhat out of breath physically, and, in all likelihood, men-

tally as well, with his sustained effort to keep up with the great men of this new world Israel; but he had his consolations. They took the material form of a wooden animal of a certain catholicity of design, since it might be called almost anything according to the varying moods of the owner, and find its habitat in a barnyard or a jungle without feeling too much out of place in either.

"The Reverend Mr. Williams carved it for me," announced Timothy, his childish pipe contrasting oddly with the deep, sweet tones of the men before him, who were talking earnestly, "out of a shingle we found upon the highway; and it is made in the likeness of one of the animals that went into Noah's Ark," he continued, explanatively. "The Reverend Mr. Williams said not which one," he added, half to himself. Apparently Mr. Williams had preserved a shred of diplomacy in casting away so many of the habiliments of compromise. Content and Archer examined the primitive toy with interested attention.

"And should it chance that we find another shingle suitable for the purpose," said Archer, gravely, "I will provide another of its kind, that it go not companionless into the Ark."

Timothy looked up confidingly and admiringly at this powerful agent of creation, as he trudged along. How wise and how great and how solemn were these men! And he meant to be wise and great and solemn, too.

The Apostle to the Indians was a man of more ascetic appearance than either of his companions, though strong and sinewy from the discipline of out-of-door life and much hardship. He bore the marks of the student of books, as well as the student of men. "'As sheep without a shepherd,'" he was saying, "and the bitterness of wrongs inflicted and, alas! undergone — and a friendliness sometimes thrust back upon them, and ever the pitiful darkness of an unknown tongue! —'as sheep without a shepherd,'" he repeated sadly.

"Nay, nay," said Williams, gently, "since thou wouldst lead them into the fold. How comes on thy work with the Word of God?"

"How comes on any work into which a man puts his life?" said the other. "How but with groanings that cannot be uttered, and with prayers and yearnings that would seem to another but a fruitless labor upon infertile ground! Were it not for the light and the promises shining through the work itself, the

discouragement would outweigh the desire; and ever there come the interruptions of the daily work which lies outside the closet, and whose demands have a peremptoriness that those of the written page must ever lack." There was a note of deep, underlying sadness in the preacher's voice, the depression of all solitary labor was upon him; but in another moment it had yielded to enthusiasm, as he replied to one earnest question after another, while Williams, guided by his own familiarity with the Indian tongue, suggested, discussed, and approved with an intelligence that was like wine to the translator.

Meanwhile Cradock accompanied them, silently, save for a nod now and then, well pleased to listen to such converse; and Archer stole frequent glances at the piquant profile so near him in the gathering gloom; and Content murmured to the tired child, whose little legs dragged wearily, but who shook his head valiantly at Archer's offers of assistance; and the night fell.

The stars were beginning to come out in the clearing sky as they stood at the door-stone, and John Eliot said farewell, for he would not enter.

"And our ways are far apart henceforth, it may be," he said with a certain wistfulness as he held Roger Williams' hand. "Would that thine lay where my lines have fallen."

"There is but the one goal, though our paths may seem to diverge ere we reach it — yea, and though mine wander into places that are solitary to the casual eye," said Williams, with a half smile.

"There is that in thy presence that bringeth a cheer we find not in thy absence, however," said Eliot. "But blessings be upon thy colony of Providence, though it, too, must needs feel the loss that has been the occasion of our coming together."

"Whose loss is it not?" said Williams, sadly.

"He was ever thy friend," observed Cradock.

"Whose friend was he not?" said Williams, again; "but verily he was mine." And there was a moment's silence as the thoughts of them all turned towards Winthrop's grave. "But as for thee," and the speaker grasped more closely Eliot's hand, "the Lord bless thee and keep thee! Thou hast chosen thy part, — it is to undo the heavy burdens, to draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the

afflicted soul — and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and thy light shall rise in obscurity, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday! Amen and Amen!"

The heads of the little group were bowed as they stood in the dim light, and in another moment the great Apostle to the Indians turned and went his lonely way, and the others, Content with misty eyes, and the men not unmoved, entered the living room where were food and fire.

Timothy, who was in nowise disconcerted by benedictions and amens at, what a later generation might consider, odd times, revived under the influences of light, warmth, and the sight of his mother, and scarcely waited for the door to be closed, before his voice rose confident and serene: "It is an animal that the Reverend Mr. Williams has carved for me, mother, out of a shingle found upon the highroad, and it is in the likeness of one of the animals that went into Noah's Ark; and," he added, "young Mr. Archer is to make me its companion."

Roger Williams' wonderful smile glanced from the child to its mother and then to Content.

"'Every one loveth gifts,'" he said; "it is well when so small an one satisfieth."

"Mother," said Content, as they stood together a moment alone, "he is a man of God."

"Yes," said Mistress Cradock, "he is a man of God. But," and she shook her head with a doubtful but friendly smile, "he is a laborer who, I fear me, is overfond of the harrow, even where the good seed is already planted."

CHAPTER III

"Those of the toil-strung hands and iron sinews,
And soul by Mother Earth with Freedom fed."

"Fortressed in conscience and impregnable will."

SALOME opened the door of her house in the early morning, a week later, and stood looking toward the eastern sky where the rose of dawn had let its petals slowly fall into the sea and grown into a paler flower. In the pearly light she lacked some of the vividness which made her so conspicuous a figure in the dimness of her room; her heavily-lashed dark eyes, in whose depths was something that observers felt was always about to flash into self-revelation which nevertheless was always withheld, had under them the shadows of weariness; but the poise of her head was as calm, and the lines of her mouth as immobile as though, if she recognized disturbing forces, it was only to ask them whence they were. There was the slight crunch of sand under a slow and heavy step, and Salome

instantly turned her head in the direction from which it came, and saw, as if coming out of the vanishing mist itself, the stooping, but in nowise feeble figure of an elderly man. He was still at some distance, for her hearing was remarkably acute; and she looked back at the water and saw two birds sweep down and up, and down again, and finally lose themselves in the vagueness of the sky, before he came near enough to exchange a word with her. His was not the dignified precision of the Puritan gentleman's costume, but the frieze coat and leather breeches of a workman whose training in manual labor had been that of the discipline of circumstances.

"You go early to Charlestown, Copton," said Salome, letting her level glance fall upon him as his step sounded before the house. The wayfarer stopped and touched his weather-beaten cap.

"A man that lets the sun get far ahead of him in his risin' over the colony, Mistress Salome," he answered, with a glance at the eastern sky, "won't find anythin' particular to put his hand to when he does get up." He spoke with a deliberation one felt might easily degenerate into grumbling.

"A likely tale," replied Salome, unmoved, "with the work of a whole colony to be done."

Copton drew nearer and laid his bag of tools on the door-stone. His face was tanned and deeply lined, and almost devoid of expression at ordinary times. His lips were too thin, and his eyes were too near together and moved oddly as if they were set on a wire and worked under outside pressure rather than inward volition. In fact, he did not seem to be thinking or conscious of what went on until a spoken word set, as it were, the machinery in motion. But in spite of these peculiarities, which unfavorable criticism might term defects, his appearance was not altogether unattractive; there was a surreptitious kindliness now and then visible in his inexpressive little eyes, and a shrewdness in the twist of his lips and the sharpness of his weather-beaten features, that inspired toleration at least.

"You 're makin' your reckonin' without allowin' for the colonists, Mistress. You can't get enough Indians for 'em to deal with, nor seed-corn for 'em to plant, to keep 'em more'n half busy," he went on reflectively; "they come over with such a store of spare energy

— they must have been savin' it up for a good while. I hope the Lord 'll see fit to grant the next generation a leetle time to kind of set down and think about buildin' a wall, as it were," he concluded piously. "It 'll be a better country for the ease-lovin' descendants of a man like me."

Salome smiled a little as she looked at the speaker, every line of whose worn face and every knotted muscle of whose thin, but strong hands, bore witness to a life of toil; but she said nothing.

"They have such a feelin' of responsibility," continued Copton; "and it ain't only the selectmen either. Now in England a man could get to his work the same day — "

"Yes, and to the end of his work the same day — if it were his own work and not that of his oppressor — and to an end, it might be, on the pillory or the block," said Salome, swiftly.

Instinctively Copton put his hand to his ear; it was maimed and scarred by the cruel usage of the hangman.

"That was twelve years agone, Mistress," he said, answering her thought rather than her words, "and yon bad man sent to his account by the will of the people, and there be some

consolation for such folks as me that it is his account and not ours — verily, I think ours be the lighter punishment," he ended, half to himself. They stood in silence a moment, while the water lapped the shore, and the keen air of a spring morning ruffled Salome's hair with a chilly caress, and their thoughts went back to a richer, warmer, less harsh and lonely country where the branding-iron and the knife had upheld true religion, and spiritual wickedness had sneered and revelled in its high places.

"But you have not forgotten," said Salome.

Copton's sharp eyes looked into hers.

"Yonder Archbishop and his work be not of the kind that be forgotten," he answered grimly.

"Then talk no more of England," said Salome, with return to her former indifference.

"Seeing as the churchman left me my tongue —" began Copton, in grumbling protest.

"An you have not use enough for it here," interrupted Salome, "you must fain go to the colony of Providence, where they say a man hath most profit of that property."

Copton's shrewd eyes twinkled as he looked up at the woman's impassive countenance.

"Should I set my helm for that free colony, now is the time to find a pilot," he said.

Salome's eyes fell from a point on the horizon line which was now sparkling in the sun, upon Copton's face.

"You would return with Roger Williams himself," she said carelessly. Copton nodded.

"He journeys to Salem to-day with the young man Archer, to get back at the week's end — with or without a strait waistcoat," the last words he added meditatively, as he stooped to pick up his tools. Salome arrested him by a gesture.

"Yes," she said, "there is something to do."

Copton, accustomed to her intuitions, blinked at her seriously without replying. "It was a good deed to come around about to your daily work that you might see if the lonely woman wanted aught that the hand of a skilled ship's carpenter might supply," she said, with the touch of graciousness that was more impressive than effusiveness from another woman, as she turned and led the way into the house. "My wheel hath stood silent since yesterday noon, and I have more knowledge in applying remedies to trees than to dead wood."

The old man bent over the broken wheel, and Salome stood in the stream of light from the open doorway watching him.

"That young man Archer," she said with one of her sudden transitions, "is a personable youth enough, and hath the stuff in him of which the councillors of our new colony be made."

"I think," said the old man, as he slowly turned the large wheel with his left hand, while his right sought for the injury, "that that young Archer 'll stand without being hitched."

Salome's rare smile banished for a moment the gravity of her lips.

"A good disposition for one seeking the company of his elected leader, who waiteth not for the spur to throw aside the bridle altogether," she observed. Copton nodded a second time, the gathering string of his pursed up, thin-lipped mouth pulled tight, and his mechanically moving eyes following the motion of the wheel. Suddenly a tall figure darkened the doorway, and Copton started a little as he looked up at the visitor, who remained, however, standing on the threshold, as Salome, without a suggestion of surprise, turned her head and her calm eyes towards the stalwart,

bronze-colored man who awaited her signal to enter.

"Good-day, Nishokou," she said, "come inside. It is a morning that brings early visitors," she added with a glance from one to the other of the two men. With the noiseless tread of moccasoned feet, the Indian crossed the rush-strewn floor, his keen eyes seizing every detail of the little room, the carpenter and his work, while they seemed scarcely to leave Salome's face. Copton mumbled something that might have been a greeting, and went on with his task; Nishokou carried a couple of partridges, which he laid upon the floor before Salome with a dignified bend of his splendid figure that made the trifling gift like an act of homage before an enthroned queen.

"The little spikes are unfurling in the forest, and the foot of Nishokou brushed the dew from their bent heads," said the man, in his own language, and then added in somewhat hesitating but quite intelligible English, "The friend of the Indian sends a word. It is to her who lives upon the sand by the creeping water."

He paused and Salome, understanding the pause as a courteous question, answered it.

"Give me the word," she said; "there is none present that may not hear it."

"The friend of the Indian makes a journey and returns. He comes to the house upon the sand. He would speak with Salome. He,

"A message and a gift."

too, has a word, and she is not to think that he has gone away bearing it with him." Salome stooped and raised the dead birds from the floor, stroked their tumbled brown feathers, and gently lifted their dangling heads one after the other, looking into their glazed eyes.

"A message and a gift," she said after a moment in whose silence a sudden brief whir

of the wheel demonstrated that it was again in working order. "I thank the giver and the messenger." The Indian bowed again and, gathering about him his brightly stained blanket, turned to go. "Wait," she added, and he paused as she went towards the broad open fireplace and, laying aside the game, drew from the ashes a brown cake of Indian meal.

"I kept it warm for my two friends," she said, with a kindliness that was still that of the princess, though assuming the homely rôle of bread-giver, as she divided it between them. The sunlight had irradiated every inch of the little room that it could reach; there was a salt smack in the cool air, and the warm smell of the sweet baked meal was as grateful as its taste. As Salome put her wool in readiness for her spinning, her skilful strong fingers passing and twisting the thread, the Indian, with his gaudily colored embroideries, his copper skin, and his bow and arrows, standing in the centre of the room, and the leather-aproned Copton munching his cornbread, while he watched her hands with eyes that destitute of expression were none the less critical and commendatory, she might have stood for a fateful oracle receiving embassadors from different

civilizations. There was a strong suggestion of the dramatic in the scene, which, if to Salome the normal flavor of existence, was an offence in the nostrils of the man who, coming slowly along the sandy beach, paused long enough before the open door to catch the aspect of the vivid little group before he walked swiftly away without salutation of any kind, an outward and visible frown the sign of his inward and spiritual disapprobation. The pause was one of but an instant; but all three had seen and recognized the passing figure. With a quick gesture of farewell Nishokou departed as silently and as rapidly as he had come, but in another direction; and Copton stooped and packed away his tools again; while Salome's features grew, if possible, more imperturbable in the rigidity of their unbetraying lines.

"The minister looked as though it did n't seem to him a new moon and an appointed feast," observed Copton, dryly. Salome did not reply, and Copton's eyes jerked to her face and away again. "And I don't know hardly as I should say it was," he went on meditatively, as he carefully ate the last crumb of the Indian bread, which had fallen on his sleeve,

by means of a moistened forefinger. "But you do make the best corncake. When folks opines that it may be you are leanin' away from the covenant of works, I say to 'em that I 've never seen signs of fallin' away in your corncake," and he trudged towards the door with his usual amiable vacuity of expression.

The color deepened in Salome's cheeks and a flash came and went in her sombre eyes, unseen by the man as he stood in the doorway, his eyes following the figure of the Indian as it grew less and less, passing swiftly over the flat country of the seaboard.

"I ain't never very easy with one of them critters around myself," he said casually. "Those folks that look like a curiosity and talk like — like a Twelfth Night Revel — they make me suspicious; they 're more for show than use. They always seem kind of more naturally related to wild cats than pale faces, as they say. You ain't afraid of him, I presume?" he concluded with mild inquisitiveness.

"Afraid?" Salome repeated the word, not indignantly, but as if it had no meaning in her ears. "The Pequots have had their lesson," she added indifferently.

"Yes, and there ain't many of 'em left to say it," he replied with a grim chuckle, as he stepped from the door-stone.

Salome moved across the room and took up a box.

"Wait," she said a second time, and, as Copton turned, she opened the box from which came a glint of gold. The man's eyes grew sharp and intent.

"No," he said slowly, and speaking with difficulty as she came towards him and held out a piece of silver, "I 've not earned it."

"Take it," she said, "thy work is worth more than that to me. Besides I have enough. It is not money that is lacking." The automatic eyes dwelt upon the coin, the brow contracted, but their owner stood firm.

"I have n't earned it," he repeated, backing off the step. "I have n't earned it. If you will give me but the chance, I 'll work it out; but I have n't earned it yet."

"As you will," said Salome, carelessly letting the bit of silver fall into the box with a chink which seemed to galvanize the weather-beaten visage, as it quivered under the sound, "it is yours when you shall choose. Strange!" she said to herself as she watched the stooping

figure of the carpenter as he pushed on steadily towards the Charlestown road, "that man loves money better than aught else in life; but I could leave this box unlocked in his sight, day after day, and it were as safe from his touch as ever were the golden apples of the Hesperides."

She turned within, closed the door, threw a log on the fire, and stood a minute before it. "So is his ignoble passion checked by the nobler will of his honesty. Alas!" she exclaimed aloud, with a sudden gesture of fiery impatience, "alas for those whose nobler passion is held in bondage by an ignoble will!"

Along the narrow streets of the busy town, the clergyman whose passage had so affected the little group about Salome's hearthstone was making his way. Early as it still was, the day had well begun, and men stood in twos and threes about the street, their faces grave with the sorrowful responsibility that the death of Governor Winthrop had entailed upon the colonists. They bowed with respect to the tall, black-coated minister, and he returned their salutation with a solemn dignity that bespoke no inclination to minimize his office. Never once did his face break into a smile, and the deep

frown in his high, narrow forehead seemed carved in its original formation. Just now the shadow of recent irritation deepened the habitual sternness of his countenance. It was caused by the sight that had met his eyes as he had paused before Salome's door. The picturesqueness of the little scene had struck the austere Puritan like the impotent blow of a childish hand; it seemed to him antagonistic, defiant, and yet it was difficult to express resentment. Life should be sad-colored, monotonous; and Salome's brilliant, inscrutable figure, Nishokou's savage dignity, the shrewd face of Copton, — which carried in its lines a subtle hint of independence, — side by side, as if in alliance, — these made it seem assertive, unrestrained. They had to his stern eyes almost been declaring themselves outlaws, at least aliens, to the commonwealth of Israel. Of course they had flashed upon his sight at an unfortunate time, and he was ready to see in their attitude something only perceptible to a diseased vision. He had been disturbed by rumors of the audacious confidence and the kindly reception of a dangerous and an exiled man; and, moreover, he had been on his way to deal with Mistress Salome anent certain re-

ports concerning her free expression of individual opinion, and to examine somewhat her relations to church and state — one and indivisible! The reports were of the vaguest, and touched not her moral character; but the solitary independence of a woman was a thing too unusual not to be looked into, especially when the woman was of somewhat unusual wisdom. "Should women undertake to be wise beyond the bounds set by Holy Writ as interpreted by the masculine understanding," said the Reverend Isaac Glover to himself, with firm lips, as he turned into a warehouse; "who knoweth but there might be a second irruption like that led by the misguided Mrs. Anne Hutchinson;" and his eyes were of a sternness that filled the soul of Caleb Cradock's apprentice with a horrified consciousness of last Sunday's misdemeanor in looking over at the women's seats, as Mr. Glover asked him if his master was within. Tremblingly, while erecting a hasty mental defence, the product of desperation, to the effect that when Mistress Cradock put a knot of ribbon in her mantle, she — the apprentice progressed no further, for he was hastily assuring his grim questioner that the worshipful Mr. Cradock was absent on affairs that would detain

him two days; and in another moment Mr. Glover, with a shake of the head that might mean anything to one already under conviction of sin, was striding down the street leaving him to settle himself again on his stool, and come gradually around to the conclusion that there had been nothing very dreadful in looking at Mistress Content Cradock across the meeting-house after all.

It was afternoon when the Reverend Mr. Glover again drew near to Salome's house. He approached the door with a determination not to be turned aside should there be in progress a very convention of strange powers and influences such as it were hinted Mistress Salome had at her command. Upon this door was an old brass knocker, a source of uneasy wonderment to certain childish souls; but under the hand of the present visitor it fell with an uncompromising sharpness in no way affected by its hint of the mysterious.

"Come," said the voice of the mistress of the house, above the whir of the spinning wheel. The clergyman opened the door and stepped inside. He had prepared himself for a word of reproof, should it be necessary, for something in the way of mild exorcism at

least; and again there was a latent aggression in the unexpectedness of the scene that met his eyes. Salome did not cease her spinning, but it had lost its fateful suggestiveness and taken on an effect of mere housewifery; and on the floor, with one or two bits of wood, and the handiwork of the Reverend Mr. Williams and the young Mr. Archer in the distinguished shape of the progenitors preserved to establish a no doubt numerous race, all ranged before him the better to admire their proportions, sat Timothy Cradock. Nothing could be more domestic, more peaceful, than the little scene. A sense of renewed discomfiture added to the acerbity of the newcomer's mood.

"I wish a good day to the Reverend Mr. Glover," said Salome's rich unaccented tones. This time, as in the case of Content's entrance, she had not turned her head towards the doorway. Certainly it was sometimes as if her eyes were but a second means of seeing. Though not disturbed as had been the morning guests by the minister's arrival, Timothy rose and, picking up his four-footed companions, — at least there was no doubt of their being four-footed, however investigators might differ

concerning further identification,— stood quietly in the shadow of the wheel. Salome took her foot from the treadle, and the wheel revolved more and more slowly, until it grew still. "I might almost have given you a good even," she continued, "the sun is westering so fast," and she glanced out of the window before she rose and moved a chair towards her guest.

"I came not to exchange with you a good day nor yet a good even," said the minister, petulantly standing in the middle of the floor, and glowering from under his narrow forehead, still further annoyed by the indifference of her address.

"No?" said the woman, in quiet interrogation. "But you have mine still — I offer it not in barter," and as she spoke she put out her hand to little Timothy, who stood with no sign of bestowing upon the newcomer that biography of his new treasures which had heretofore waited in readiness upon his tongue. "Go on with thy play of the Ark, child," she said, pushing him gently towards the more distant side of the room. "The animals have but just begun to think that the rain is a rain extraordinary, thou rememberest," and as he slipped away, she turned her dark eyes upon

Glover in grave attention. Her soft answer had not served to turn away his wrath, and he seized the first pretext that offered itself for its expression.

"It seemeth not to me," he said in hard metallic accents, "a godly and a sober recreation for even a woman and a child, to make a play out of a catastrophe that destroyed a sinning world. It savoreth of irreverence."

"So that the child but choose to remain within the ark, it may be that he hath learned the lesson of the catastrophe."

"There be other lessons —" and he paused to rightly frame his reproof.

"Yes," went on Salome, as if completing his sentence, her level glance meeting his angry one, "if he preserve and bear away the olive branch, it may be too that his elders and betters can go little further in practical exposition."

"Would you teach a minister of God to interpret His Scripture!" demanded Glover.

"Nay, verily; it is not from the mouth of a woman like me, versed in bitter experience, and having gained such wisdom as I have by the hardest, that the wise and prudent should learn aught, but from the mouths of babes,"

and her eyes fell from the face of the clergyman to that of Timothy, as he stood by the window, grasping his salvage and looking out to the sea, fancying what it was like when it covered all of the earth save Mt. Ararat.

The Reverend Mr. Glover was angry, but controversy with this person of deceptive humility was becoming undignified.

"It is Caleb Cradock's child?" he asked.

"It is Caleb Cradock's youngest child."

"I marvel that so careful a man as is Caleb Cradock permitteth a child to go where he may fall in with dangerous companions."

"Dost thou fear that I will teach the child irreligion and contempt for authority?"

Glover looked at the imperturbable face of the woman, which showed not the slightest sign of wrath or even annoyance, and for a moment sought another answer, but though a hard he was not an unjust man.

"No," he replied; "but I saw here this morning yon heathen man who still rejects the truths of revealed religion, though dealt with faithfully by the excellent pastor of Roxbury church."

"At least there is no danger that this young Timothy will learn from him to give heed to

fables and endless genealogies which minister to questions rather than godly edifying — Nishokou's language is but that of the woods and fields." Mr. Glover did not specifically reply, for he found himself alarmingly near the unauthorized wish that the laity were not so familiar with the epistles; but he continued severely, —

"Ephraim is joined to his idols."

"Yes, but Ephraim is also a 'pleasant child,' — and we have the Apostle's warrant for believing that even the lawless are under the law of charity."

"And Copton — it hath occurred to me now and again that Copton hath known swervings from the ordained path of thought, though he be a skilled workman and a law-abiding citizen."

"He hath stood in the pillory, and hath had his ears cropped for the truth," said Salome's unmoved even tones; "and it befitteth not one like me, who hath barely come under the physical hand of spiritual tyranny, to gird at him."

Glover's gloomy eyes lightened with sudden fire. "He hath borne witness," he said briefly, yielding that tribute to suffering for conscience'

sake which even present disapproval could not check upon Puritan lips.

"But the more shame if he falter now," he persisted the more dogmatically for the admission.

"Fear not!" said Salome, shortly, as if a little weary of the discussion. "He is not one that leadeth children astray."

There was something in the words that penetrated the panoply of self-righteousness in which this really conscientious man was too apt to array himself.

"I said not that he was," he observed unwillingly, as he rose. "But to-day is not altogether favorable for what I would have said to thee — that I perceive. I leave you to your work," and he glanced at her spinning wheel. "I am glad that it be woman's work, and of so necessary and so domestic a character." At least there was no harm in casting forth something in the way of general admonition.

"My work can well wait," said Salome, her manner, like her words, not without courtesy.

"Thy father hath left the town," said Glover, abruptly, to Timothy, his hand on the latch of the door.

"Yea, worshipful sir," the child answered. The clergyman opened the door. "He hath gone to Salem as I told thee," went on Timothy, turning to Salome; "and my sister Content is with him and young Mr. Archer, who hath a knife that hath a fearsome edge." The stern visitor stepped out into the afternoon sunlight, heedless of the chatter. "And they be all there," piped the precise little voice, "in the company of the Reverend Mr. Roger Williams." The all-but-closed door swung noisily open.

"What!" demanded the Reverend Mr. Glover, "I had heard — what dost thou say?" he repeated.

Timothy had been taught that clerical wrath had an edge for evil-doers more fearsome than that of Mr. Archer's knife, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"The child speaks truth," said the woman, laying her hand on his quaking shoulder. "But it is not a truth that is meant for all hearers nor yet doers of the word." There was a moment's pause, as the two confronted each other, and then for the second time that day the Reverend Israel Glover left Salome's door in a state of mind bordering on the anger of the unregenerate.

CHAPTER IV

"He had stiff knees, the Puritan,
That were not good at bending."

"He who settles Freedom's principles
Writes the death-warrant of all tyranny."

IT had gone about that for the love he bore them, Roger Williams had come, at risk of arrest and expulsion, to visit his former people in Salem town. Friendly lips had whispered the news in friendly ears, and whether it were that the unfriendly element was absorbed in more pressing affairs, or that it had been kept in ignorance, or even that it tacitly closed its eyes to his presence, it is certain that so far the exile was unmolested. As by general consent, and as in all moments of general interest which called for a common meeting ground, the steps of the people turned towards the wooden house where this beloved, if misguided, pastor had so often met them in public worship. So without formal summons the place was crowded to its limited capacity.

At the plain reading desk which was so near to the congregation that sacerdotal pomp would have been as difficult to maintain as it was foreign to his convictions, sat the man whose storm-tossed life had left its marks upon this colony, as it had graven lines upon his countenance, and whose underlying sweetness of character had drawn these hearts to him in a certain bond, if not of peace. Men had brought their wives to greet him, and in one corner of the little room sat Content, quietly waiting till her father should take her to the house of Mistress Dotey, where she was to pass the night. She had put on her white camlet cloak lined with blue for the journey, which, notwithstanding its serious import, bore for her the aspect of a holiday. Beneath the brim of her beaver hat, her soft parted hair was drawn smoothly back in the simplest fashion. It was a high-bred looking company of men and women, notwithstanding the simplicity of their apparel and the absence of all show and parade. The self-consciousness of those whose uneasy lives are a study and a comparison and a speculation concerning the lives of those about them, was absent, banished by the earnestness of a common cause and a common hope; and the

dignity of the pursuit of those things which are not ephemeral imparted a look of distinction to the faces of these colonists who, while missing so much luxury and brightness, had at least escaped the friction of the unessential and the trivial. Here and there were some at variance with the general impression, — sharp, worldly faces, which stood forth from their environment, in which austerity had been carried over into sternness and unlovableness; but perhaps the only touch of cynicism in the assembly hung about the mouth of a young man who sat in the rear of the cramped little building, his head resting against the wooden wall, and his eyes wandering over the company in a glance which, while indifferent, was not unobserving. The very indolence of his attitude made him noticeable among these men of earnest bearing, and the brilliancy of the red lining of his coat, the idleness of the gesture with which he played with his gloves, and their richly embroidered cuffs, emphasized the difference between him and them. His eyes dwelt longest on Content's delicate profile, and returned to it more than once.

"It were hard to find fault with that face," he said to himself, "though it be a picture but

poorly framed. It would not disgrace the laces and brocades of Whitehall. In truth," he continued to muse, "these colonial beauties, while they have lost something of the vigorous bloom and superb outline of our English dames, have already won in their place, whether from the sharp climate or the thin air of theological discourse, a certain delicate pallor and spring-like grace of form that it would not be hard to make a fashion even among people of taste. This young Puritan now, though she be no Venus nor Juno, might pose not inaptly as a Flora or a Psyche — but what have we here? Verily, the lion of controversy hath begun to roar!" and his handsome eyes, with their drooping eyelids and lashes, turned from Content's cheek, which would certainly have flushed an indignant red at his comparisons, had she been cognizant of their levity, to the reading desk where from the midst of a group of men Roger Williams' voice rose in clarion tones.

"That do I deem not a matter of civil judgment," he was saying, "what lieth between a man and his God."

"Yet they that be not taught of the Lord, how shall we put them in charge over us?" demanded a man with dark, intense face.

"They be as broken cisterns that hold no water, and we shall become as an oak whose leaf fadeth."

"Yea, if we be not taught of the Lord — if the teaching come not to our souls, that is, and not through the lips of another."

"Pause, lest you lead some into error!" cried the former speaker. "Would you speak to us of a covenant of grace, and of an inward light, and of such matters as lead to anarchy and unseemliness?"

"Nay, nay, but I would remember that there be diversity of gifts," said Williams, his eyes glowing with the excitement of argument so dear to his soul. "Were you a stranger without the Bay, it is to a doctor of physic, or to a pilot that you would trust the conduct of your ship and the life of those within it?" He paused a moment and then went swiftly on. "Verily, I say it would be to the man who knoweth the rocks and the shoals from previous knowledge and experience, rather than to that mayhap better man who hath studied the wants of human bodies but after a different fashion. It hath been proved in older civilizations than is ours, that a magistrate may be a godly man and but an indifferent

guardian of the public weal. There are 'differences of administration' and 'diversities of operations' and 'to one is given the word of wisdom and to another faith —'"

"Yea," interrupted his opponent; "but let us try the spirits whether they be of God — else do we cut loose from all that we have come hither to establish."

"Yea," assented Williams, in his turn; "but let us not try those spirits by the law of man, but by the divining rod of our own consciences."

There was an uneasy stir in the little assemblage. Men looked at each other gravely under serious brows, and the women sighed as they looked at the face of the speaker. It was a dangerous topic, and they were not ready to discuss it here and now, though there were some present who even then held that there was a danger of encroachment in the magistracy, with its double strength of civil and religious. Content moved restlessly, her sensitiveness felt that the glow of the re-union of this man and his people was being chilled by his own aggressiveness. She glanced about her and caught the trace of dissatisfaction upon the faces of the audience; and then, for

the first time, she met the eyes of the young man who was watching the scene with a half inquisitive, half inattentive smile. Her eyes were held an instant by his, in a surprised curiosity, before she withdrew them, while her tinge of color grew into a deeper crimson at her own folly.

The discussion about the desk grew more heated. It was as if Williams had returned but to stir again into angry flame the embers of forgotten strife. The duty of the magistrates to suppress heresy was a subject much in the public mind and provocative of much difference of opinion, which, though expressed with sobriety, was none the less burning in intensity. The discussion had attained proportions and an intricacy of Scriptural interpretation that passed far beyond Content's comprehension, and she grew sad under her perception of the change of feeling created by the man himself. From the sympathetic, courteous, eloquent companion who had laid his hand upon John Eliot's shoulder and lifted up his voice in benediction, he had become the eager, aggressive controversialist who cast moderation to the winds, left no word of peace to work its will, and was neither to bind nor

to hold. She looked at her father, and saw her own sadness reflected in his face. Taking no part in a discussion which must have been to him what a tempting cup is to many another, he listened, while the stern lines of his face deepened and his eyes looked a rebuke which Williams answered not, nor heeded. And all the time Content was conscious of those other eyes that rested so carelessly on the excited little group and held a smile in them which, with tingling resentment, she felt to be allied to scorn. She resisted a most indecorous impulse to go over to the insolent stranger and tell him that this was no place for scorn, that it but blinded his own sight, that this man had the root of the matter in him, and was filled with love to the brethren; and yet, withal, her spirit rose in vexed irritation against the very man whom she yearned to defend. She had no conception of a state of mind that would have accepted her defence and yet still maintained its attitude of indifference.

"No more right," Williams was saying, "than —" and he paused an instant for a simile, and his eyes swept the audience and darted a glance through the window opened to admit the air of an unusually balmy spring day

— "than have ye a right to the lands that ye have taken well nigh by force from those to whom they were divinely given, and who are even now learning to acknowledge the Giver."

It was the old question, — could he not have let it rest? No right to the land? — to the fields that they had tilled and the harvests they had reaped? Toil-worn faces of men turned and followed his glance out over the sunny landscape with its flat marshes and its brown earth; and toil-worn hands of women grasped tighter the Bibles that they had brought in their hands, as they remembered the weary hours of spinning and weaving, and the anxious days of privation, while the land was being painfully brought to lend them increase. Surely the right of prayer and toil and of blood and tears was a deeper claim than any could be of savages to whom it was but a hunting ground. It was not without pathos, the silent appeal of that reminiscent glance. But a fiercer impatience flashed from some eyes.

"If our God be our God, then is this land our land," exclaimed an impassioned voice; and a general murmur confirmed its speech.

Just then the door opened and Archer strode in; it was a stalwart group that he joined, but

his height and breadth made him a noticeable man even here. His keen young glance took in the situation before he had latched the door behind him. He saw the poignant intensity of his beloved teacher, the irritation, the sorrow, upon the faces of the company, and, perhaps more distinctly than all, the hurt, wondering eyes and the indignant flush of Content's flower-like face, as her daintily poised head rose against the background of sombre color. Across his own face a shadow fell. He stepped to Cradock's side and exchanged a few words with him, while the murmur swelled into a protest of dissent. Its utterance was like feeding the flame of a leaping conflagration. Roger Williams threw back his head, and his voice vibrated as it rose above the rest.

"And if our God be our God, then is the land not ours save by honest purchase and Christian charity!" he thundered. "Was it the God of the Christian who led the council of your united colonies to yield the friend of Roger Williams to the tomahawk of his foes? Upon their heads be the blood of Miantonomoh!" he added in a penetrating undertone that reached every ear. It was a sore subject with both speaker and listeners.

"Beware lest you speak treason!" said Cradock, in sudden, sharp warning. "Forget not that there is a government, though of the people!" It was the first word that he had spoken, and it arrested momentarily the flood of Williams' speech. "Specially doth it ill become a proscribed man," he added in a lower tone of keener intention, "to speak evil of magistrates." Williams nodded, and his voice was gentler as he continued.

"I go back to that sorry day," he said, "but to illustrate that though you have the sanction of the magistrates for your land-holding, that sanction is —"

"It jars somewhat on the ears of a loyal subject," interrupted a clear voice which seemed not to raise itself above its natural tone, but which was distinctly audible in the growing confusion of the crowded room, "that the names of your magistrates are so often upon the lips of this worshipful assembly. If there be differences concerning the holding of your lands, as one might judge from the late eloquence so abounding in most recondite allusion," and he smiled slightly, "is it not to the owner of these lands of Massachusetts Bay that such difficulties should be referred? Methinks your hold-

ings be of his Majesty King Charles the First," and his slow glance, with its flavor of impertinence, travelled about the room, while he struck lightly his embroidered gloves one against the other — as if to speak to these provincials it were not necessary to intermit even so slight an occupation. Archer had left Cradock's side and was making his way towards Content, when these words arrested his attention. He stopped in the middle of the crowded room, and across the heads of the seated company, and between the figures of those who stood about, the glances of the two young men met with the flash of crossing swords, and while they held each other for an instant, the speaker's grasp tightened on his glove, holding it suddenly still, and then, unhurriedly, his eyes passed on, dwelt curiously on Cradock, and finally rested on Williams and those nearest him. A silence tense with meaning, though no throb of impatience was audible through it, fell upon the assembly. Content had not turned her head to identify the speaker. She knew as well as if the voice had repeatedly sounded in her ears that it came from the haughty lips of the young man whose attitude she blindly resented from the first.

"Surely I am not mistaken in thinking that his Majesty has not resigned his over-lordship to these —" the supercilious tones hesitated a moment, — "to these giants of theology that sit upon the bench of the magistracy, judging souls and bodies."

His words had roused a keen resentment, he had touched a chord it were well for English supremacy not to set vibrating too harshly; but these men were not children to be baited by a boy with an assumption of authority. It was Cradock who spoke, while Archer went on to Content's side, holding back the retort that had sprung to his young lips.

"It is not a thing to be forgotten either by us or thee," he said with calm dignity, "that our charter is from the hand of a king. But neither is it," and the company held its breath as his voice grew sterner and weightier, his eyes fixed upon the slender handsome man who leaned forward, a plumed hat swinging lightly in his hand, apparently unconscious of the tide that was rising in the breasts of those about him, "neither is it a thing to be set aside, that we be freemen and not serfs; and while our consciences approve, we have no appeal to make to a more distant tribunal save

in a cause, yet unforeseen, that must needs go beyond our own doors — into the presence of the King of England." The company breathed freer, it was not a disloyal answer; but neither could it be said to positively invoke the excellent discretion and unswerving justice of the first Charles.

"An appeal to the king!" muttered the antagonist of Williams, under his breath. "Who is this young blade who is in such haste to hide him under the ermine?"

"I know not," answered his neighbor, in the same tone; "and if the royal mantle be long enough to sweep across yonder sea, it may knock down a spire or two! It behooves us to be careful," and they exchanged looks of a certain austere humor.

"King and council would doubtless be obliged to the thoughtfulness that saves the royal head of this colony from unnecessary anxiety," said the young royalist, with unabashed irony, as, with an air of withdrawing from the discussion, he threw himself back into his former indolent pose, his curled head against the rough wall. And no one there had the answer ready, for no one knew that two months earlier the royal head had fallen before the

whirlwind of a people's wrath, and his Majesty Charles the First had been sent to meet a God who we are credibly informed has a strong distaste for lying lips and is even less a respecter of persons than was the Long Parliament.

"Your father bids me bring you without," said Archer, respectfully, in Content's ear. "He saith the discussions here may detain him another hour, and be perhaps something above a maid's understanding, — it is his phrase, not mine," he interpolated hastily, recalling sundry experiences of the last few days. "The sun shines and the air is soft," he added, as she hesitated; "we can walk along the highway or even across the fields."

But he misunderstood the cause of her hesitation; her father's suggestion was ample warrant; but she was somewhat shaken mentally by the scene she had witnessed. There was a deep excitement in such hours as this had been, — the excitement of conviction, and a living contemporary interest in every word, such as even the whistling of the name of Anabaptist fails to awake in the souls of this generation. She was disappointed, bitterly disappointed in Roger Williams; he seemed to her woman's sense of fitness so needlessly, so

ungraciously antagonistic. And this young stranger with his babbling of an appeal to the king! The insolence of his ease and assurance made her eyes bright with indignation. The thrill of deep, though governed disapproval that had stirred the strength of these people had been as evident to her as if it had been loudly spoken. The incident had changed the atmosphere of the place; general controversy had given place to discussions in narrow limits and among detached groups. Archer still waited by her side; but in the moving about of the clustered figures there was nothing noticeable in their companionship.

"I will go," she said at last; and they threaded their way through the company to the door near which stood Cradock, who nodded gravely by way of dismissal.

The salt air was delightfully fresh to Content's flushed cheeks, and she walked swiftly, with a sense of relief after the scene within the meeting-house.

"He is two men!" she exclaimed after a few moments in the clear buoyant air, and she spoke with an accent of irritation. "And it lies not beyond the wit of a maid to denote which is the more winning."

"Nay, I pray thee," said Archer, whose single-eyed conscientiousness was apt to lead him into an unfortunate choice of times and seasons for differing with Content, "then were he double-faced — which even no enemy had ever ground for saying of Mr. Williams."

"And why not double-faced, if two-souled?" she persisted. "And that he be two-souled, I do contend. It was one soul that looked from his eyes upon little Timothy and the Apostle Eliot, and another that saw his old flock come with warm hearts to greet him, and a warm hand-grasp ready for him — those who stood by him in times of trouble, alas! — and yet held out to them naught but the — the stone — of old differences."

It were well that Caleb Cradock's ears were safely shut into the meeting-house, while his daughter spoke of the stone instead of the life-giving bread of religious discussion! As for Archer, it was not the first time that he had been staggered by her eloquence.

"He held his own, I warrant me," he observed. His craven avoidance of the point at issue met with the check it deserved.

"His own? Yea, verily — it be ever his own that he is holding! I would he held that

something hath been committed to other saints as well! If his own be ever the good thing he would have us believe, let him share it with those about him."

This species of logic dazzled, if it did not convince. Archer realized anew the unwisdom of provoking an argument. Nevertheless the curves of Content's lips were ameliorating.

"Would ye have them accuse him of Antinomianism," he ventured, having picked up most of the scraps of the conversation he had not heard from the bystanders, "and have him keep silence?"

Content paused and faced him. The spring air waved the soft hair about her low forehead, a thrush sang from an elm.

"I am aweary of Antinomianism!" she exclaimed.

And the heavens fell not.

CHAPTER V

"The instincts of great souls are Fate
And have predestined sway."

"There never yet was flower fair in vain,
Let classic poets rhyme it as they will."

THEY left behind them the little town, and, turning to the west, walked towards the open country and a hill that lay not far from the settlement. It was a rough path, and at last no path at all; but Content felt in the mood for physical difficulties, and to Archer it was no hardship to follow whither this companion led. She walked with an added buoyancy springing from the sudden relaxation of the tension she had been under. The sea sparkled before her eyes, the embracing heaven held the earth in the hollow of its hand, the little meeting-house seemed unnatural, constrained, hot with the futile friction of trivialities, the spring air touched her cheek with a warmth that came straight from the heart of a generous and a tolerant Nature, and, unconsciously, Con-

tent cast behind her the limitations of thought to trust herself to the limitless wisdom of the Creator.

"It is not altogether easy to see the reasons of all Mr. Williams' beliefs," observed Archer, thoughtfully, as they crossed a stile leading from a pasture to a bit of wooded land.

"Truly there be men in yonder colony who have an independence of thought that we of the Bay may well marvel at!" mocked Content, as she stepped demurely to his side. "Or is it but now that you have come to so striking a conclusion?"

"You of the Bay have never done him justice," asserted Archer, stoutly.

"It may be. There have been those, however, that would have prescribed a shorter shrift. Think you it would have come nearer to his deserts?" and she pushed back a branch of fragrant hemlock that would have caught her hat. She knew she was bold; but the look of indignation in her companion's eyes confirmed her mood of laughter. It was the fault of the song of the thrush and the slender masts against the clear sky and the salt savor of the air as it blew from the sea.

"And you yourself, would you have banished beyond seas — I say not the leader of controversy, but the man that sat beneath your father's roof-tree, and told Timothy tales of knighthood, and called down blessings upon Mr. John Eliot?"

Content stooped, and, pushing aside the moist dead leaves, plucked a tiny flower from the roots of a sturdy tree.

"Poor little blossom," she murmured irrelevantly, "born out of due time. If I had not found thee thou wouldst have had no companion, and have died thinking that thou alone didst remember that there was a spring! And if he would pull down my father's roof-tree," she resumed, "I should have thought it were a less disastrous outlay of money and labor if he built his own roof in another colony, that he might build up and pull down, and spare me a place to lay my head!"

"Give me the flower," said Archer, holding out his hand to hers, which lightly swung the tinted mayblossom. "It hath found its spring in the warmth of thy greeting; I will keep it till we discover its fellow."

The girl looked up into the strong face of the man; there was a hint of compulsion in

his tone which touched her sensitiveness, and yet was not altogether repelling.

"There is no companion for one who hath mistaken the meaning of the hour," she objected. "One swallow makes not a summer — one poor little flower cannot make a spring," and she blew softly upon the half closed petals, which gave out the faintest suggestion of delicate perfume.

"But it belongs to the hour, nevertheless," said Archer; "I pray you, Mistress Content, give me the flower."

The slender hand fell again to her side, still swinging the trifling thing.

"I say not," she said, with a second most trying irrelevancy, "that I would not have sent to him privately and bade him get him gone without further mischance — like Mr. Governor — and maybe a word or two of personal friendship — I say not I would not have done that — and maybe, withal, a token," she went on; "yes, a token — there could be no harm in sending a token to take with him to Providence."

Her wide-open eyes shone with something that Archer had not seen before in their starry depths; he was not sure what it was,

but it was bewilderingly pleasant to look upon.

"Nay, what harm could there be in a token," he said, putting aside a rash inclination to take the object of his wishes from her grasp; "and since it is now too late to send him one for his edification, let me have the flower to bear on my own journey."

"Oh, the flower," said Content, carelessly, glancing down at it as if she had forgotten its existence, — "a flower is but a sorry thing to give one who journeys," and she passed him to climb the ascent at the foot of which they had been standing. He did not dare to touch the hem of the gray gown; but he stood still in his place, and, as he did not follow, she turned and looked down at him.

"It is a sorrier to go without what one has asked for," he said; "and, moreover, it seemeth a niggard thing to hold back from the flower what maybe it waited for here on our path." Content laughed a little.

"'Corban, it is a gift,'" she said lightly, and she held out to him the delicately fragrant spray. He had reached for it, but he drew back his hand.

"Nay, nay," he said; "it settleth not all scores between you and me."

Content made a little gesture of impatience. "Prithee, take it," she said, with a half affected petulance; "while you and I have the esteemed Mr. Williams and his controversies before our eyes, we shall lack not ever an unsettled score!" And with this ungracious yielding Archer was content, taking the proffered gift with a tenderness that did not escape the girl's perception, though she turned away instantly and faced the slope again. When they reached its summit, they had a wider view of the sea and of the town lying below them to the right. There was scarcely a patch of snow left in the wide landscape; only here and there, in the sheltered hollows, winter had laid its white fingers so firmly that it could not yet be entirely shaken off.

"Let us rest," suggested Content, finding a seat on a fallen tree-trunk; "the sun beats down here as if summer were at hand."

"If you grow cold, we must not tarry," admonished Archer, as he dropped down beside her; "and in an hour I have to see you safely to Mistress Dotey's door."

"It is not far," and she looked back to the town, where the building they had just left was discernible amid the clustered roofs. "Mis-

"She held out to him the delicately fragrant spray."

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tress Dotey left the assembly with a sad heart, I fear. She is one that hath cherished the memory of her former pastor, and it liked her not that he returned but to strive anew."

Archer's eyes were not on the roofs of the settlement, but following a course pointed out by memory.

"Do you see yonder woods?" he asked, indicating a path towards the south.

"Yes."

"It was there that Roger Williams spent his first night of unsheltered exile."

"And you were with him?"

"Yes; but what was it to me — a lad used to court the elements for naught but pleasure? But to him — his heart bound to his people, his head weary with thought and struggle, his love hurt with wounds met in the house of his friends, his shoulders bowed beneath the burden of reproach!" — the young man's voice trembled, and he paused.

"Tell me further," said Content, gently.

"The heathen of the forest was kinder to him than were they in the bonds of Christian fellowship; for the non-believer made him welcome when those of his own household of faith sent him forth. It was cold, — cold

with the very coldness of death, — and he might have warmed himself at many hearths had he but respected less the sanctity of his own conscience; he was hungry, and he might have been fed at many tables had he but admitted that some may give and others only take. He wandered, lost in the dreary sameness of untrodden forest, because he would not follow the leadership of blind guides!"

Archer had risen, and a stern indignation swept his words in a current so impetuous that Content was thrilled by his emotion; he was no longer the somewhat literal youth she had jested with. His eyes were sad with the same sadness that now and then looked forth from those of his leader and friend. Again she perceived that resemblance between them that was rather spiritual than physical.

"But how should they know? — they did not know —" she stammered. His eyes fell upon her with a certain scorn that seemed, for the moment, to be for her.

"They knew that winter is cold," he said slowly; "that wild beasts are in the forest; that bread lies not in the path that a wanderer makes through the wilderness; that the endurance of a man unspared and un-

grudged in the service of his God, cannot forever withstand cold, hunger and exhaustion. They knew these things, and they sent him forth. And the Lord led him to a pleasant place; but it was from out the shadow of a great weariness."

Content's eyes were full of tears; she shivered in the warm rays of the sun; looking at the patches of snow in the hollows, she felt their cruel wet chill.

"I knew not," she half whispered; "it was a wrong. And you were with him," she said again; "and you saw him. And you have listened to my levity and my reproaches, and you rebuked me not — till now."

Archer's face softened. "And I rebuke thee not now," he said; "I do but tell thee. Yes, I was with him, and what think you? That he railed at the severity of those at whose hands he had received exile? Nay, Mistress Content, from the lips of yonder man who was driven forth a second time to find a home, there fell not a word of bitterness against those whose will it was. They were in his eyes men who stood ever before the Lord, though they saw not all things clearly, even in the light of His presence."

"Truly he is one among many," murmured Content. Unconsciously the young man, moved by his subject, had taken on the lofty tone of metaphor and allusion so often coming from the lips of the older men of the time. His own belief in the greatness and generosity of his hero was communicated in the stress of his emotion. Content forgot the small room, hot with the electric spark of uncalled-for controversy, forgot the persistent disregard of peace and pleasantness against which she had chafed. Holding out her hands with an impulsiveness far removed from her usual calm discretion, —

"Forgive my cavilling spirit!" she exclaimed. "He has conquered me too."

Her words brought Archer back to the personal. His dark cheek reddened under its tan, and he sought for words and found none; but he took her hand, grasped it with strong gentleness, and let it fall before she fully realized what demonstration her enthusiasm had led her into. A moment later he sat down beside her.

"When we were at the foot of the hill, Mistress Content," he said quietly, "you said, — speaking of this little flower, — 'There is no

companionship for one who hath mistaken the meaning of the hour!' The words had a pretty thoughtfulness to my ears, though they fell lightly enough from your lips."

"I would that my words had always a thoughtfulness that I know but ill how to impart to them," she observed, with a nod of self-disapproval.

Archer's eyes were following again the line of that forced march of thirteen years ago.

"It seems to my loving consideration, more and more, that it may be only that Mr. Williams hath mistaken the meaning of the hour—" he paused, and then went on, sadly, "so he goeth alone, without even the countenance of his friends and well-wishers."

"It may be that he hath another revelation," said Content, doubtfully; "but we must keep the charge committed to us, and he seems, now and then, to my father and others, fain to let it slip through his fingers."

"His striving is not their striving, it is true," assented the other; "but—" He left the sentence unfinished, as he looked down at the flower he still carried in his hand. It was yet too early to speak the words, religious liberty; but vaguely, unformulated, that idea floated

through these young minds as they gazed upon the glorious breadth of sky and sea. They could not guess that its day was drawing nearer, any more than they dreamed that they were sitting in the very place where the cloud of intolerance should cast the darkest shadow that falls across the annals of New England.

"I wonder who is the young gallant who chatters so briskly of an appeal to the king," said Archer, as they turned down the street leading to Mistress Dotey's. Content had more than suspected the same question to be lurking somewhere in the recesses of her own consciousness, though she would never have expressed so compromising a curiosity.

"I know not," she said with discreet indifference; "but did it not seem to you that his attention was tinctured with a certain malice?" she added, with the air of uttering an afterthought.

"Indeed, it was a tincture that colored the whole substance, to my eyes," answered Archer, grimly. "It was far from seemly that a youth of his daintiness should suggest methods to the sober men of our colony. An appeal to the king, forsooth!" he exclaimed under his breath. Content looked at him askance.

"But his Majesty King Charles hath surely a right to our allegiance," she said with extreme quietness.

"Yea, verily. But we need no Daniel from the other side of the water to make clear to us the interpretation thereof," answered the young man, with steadfast lips. "His name is Stukely," he went on; "that I learned ere I entered the meeting-house, and no one had much more to tell of him save that he came over recently in the Thunder."

As he spoke, the door of a house a few yards in front of them opened, and Stukely came out, closing it quickly behind him, and stepping towards them along the street with a lightness that suggested an almost impertinent indifference to the ban that had but just been laid upon him. His sleepy but penetrative glance included Content and her escort before, removing his plumed hat with a salute coming near exaggeration in its respectful homage, he stood aside to let her pass. All the dignity of her twenty years of Puritan restraint was in the slight acknowledgment that Content vouchsafed the somewhat conspicuous courtesy.

"He renders me the common highway as though it were his own to bestow," she re-

marked, as they passed on. "Think you it were well to hasten back and tell him he may have a piece of it back again for his daily use!" she queried, looking up at Archer, upon whose brow there had, for some reason or other, settled a frown of annoyance.

"He needs no highway to go whither assumption may carry him!" he grumbled.

"Alack!" broke out Content, with her gay laughter, "he hath made our serious young counsellor from the Colony of Free Speech talk like the sentences out of a book of maxims! Though, methinks, he hath no small conceit of himself, trust me, that great honor hath not come to his realization!" Archer's frown yielded to her raillery, and he did not even throw a backward glance to the young cavalier, who had paused at the corner of the street to look after the slight figure of Content.

"A quaint and most unyielding dignity," he said to himself. "Truly, I am glad that there be something in these provinces, besides discussions of church and state, that a man of the world may divert himself with!" and with a shrug of his handsome shoulders he went on his way.

"There is Mistress Dotey," said Content, "and my father with her. I hope I have not angered him by being late," and she quickened her steps. "Does he not wear a look of anxiety to your observation?"

"The sun is in his eyes — we are not late; it strikes the hour but now," answered Archer, and in a moment they reached the door-stone where Content's guardian waited for them.

"You are on the very dot of the hour," said Mistress Dotey, with cordial greeting. "I could have borne with thy company a moment earlier, Content; but thy father's child hath never time to waste in superfluities, I warrant me. And as for you, young Mr. Archer — whom I know by name and by report — you will join us at the dining-table where there is a plate ready for you —"

"But first he will walk with me to the end of the street, that I may have a word with him," said Cradock, forestalling either regrets or acceptance. "I will not keep him long, but the matter bears not withholding from his ears."

Content looked an inquiry as she entered the hospitable door of her hostess, and the two

men left it to pace slowly down the street, talking as they went.

"It is nothing to rouse thy apprehensions, dear heart," said Mistress Dotey, comfortably, "that I promise thee, though I know not precisely the subject; but I do know that they but speak of the public weal, and to weak women like us that seemeth but a little thing when brought alongside our private woe — hast ever thought that? — as for me I be not of the seed of the martyrs. Sit thee down there and let me lay aside thy warm cloak — ah, that weaving is of thy mother's warp and woof! — no, so they leave me my roof and my son and my husband, and let me bake bread for them in peace, I fear me I would grow fat in a slothful ease, even though there be dangerous upsetting of creeds and a usurpation of power that pertaineth to spiritual things! Dry thy feet, sweetheart, thou hast been through damp paths; our roads, the best of them, are but in a sorry plight, — sloughs of despond that discourage a timid soul like mine more than doubts of the calling and election of certain church members that sit heavy on the consciences of the more truly godly."

Mistress Dotey's physical characteristics

were the natural development of her mental traits. She was portly almost to clumsiness, and her words gurgled forth in unhindered fluency. "Yes, an they give me leave to welcome those whom I would welcome, and talk not overmuch to me of things I cannot understand, I care not if they call me—" and she glanced over her shoulder, "to think that I should say so to Caleb Cradock's own child! but Caleb Cradock knows well that I draw not lines too tightly—I care not if they call me Anabaptist itself! Rest thy head on the chair-back, my pretty, thou art weary. I would they would hasten that we may give thee food. Nay, I say I can close my door and windows, and light my lamp and be content though they whistle 'Anabaptist' through the key-hole and down chimney—yes, I would!—and it would trouble them more than me—and so I say of these guardians of the public weal, and it may be—" and her tone sank to discretion,—"that now that Mr. Endecott is to be Mr. Governor, he will have less time for recalcitrants—and it was well that he was away to-day," and Mistress Dotey cast her eyes heavenward, "for no one else would, without his express authority, lay hands on

him who was here but now; but Mr. Endecott hath a single eye for his duty and perceiveth not the distracting hindrances thereto, which pull back weak souls like yours and mine — and I for one can breathe as freely if he take his daily presence to brood over Boston. There they come, thy father — thy father is a good man, Content, and so I told thy mother when my good word was more worth his seeking than mayhap the grave selectman thinketh now! — and the young man with him is a well built and a personable, over serious for his years; but he will get over that and all will go well, ere he reach my age — wouldst smooth thy unruffled hair? — and fold the neckerchief I see peeping from thy reticule? — come this way, then — I have a mirror that —"

But at the door they were detained. Archer had stepped in, outstripping the elder man.

"Mistress Dotey," he said, "I come but to thank thee for thy courtesy, and to decline it. Mistress Content," he went on, and there was a quality in his tone which held the attention of both the women, "thy father, speaking for others, hath committed to my youth and inexperience a trust that it will go hard if I do not faithfully guard. It leaveth me but little time

for farewells, ere I take it up. I sail for England at dawn — "

"Alack-a-day!" exclaimed Mistress Dotey, who could hold her peace no longer, and slipped past him to meet Cradock, who was just entering.

"And there be but few hours," went on Archer, without heeding her, "between now and then. My service to thy mother, whom I had thought to thank in person, and a word to Timothy of the tales I mayhap will have to tell him when I return; and now, Mistress Content," he paused a moment, and looked down at the graceful head, its hair slightly roughened by the hood, a look of startled non-comprehension in her wide eyes, before they fell before his, "farewell. The stranger that came to thy gate but yesterday may say no more. But," and his voice was too low to reach other ears, "he bears away with him the fragrance of a flower that hath dared to bloom too early — farewell." He bowed low over her hand with a respect unsurpassed by the young elegant who had saluted her a half hour earlier.

"Going to England!" exclaimed Mistress Dotey, as she floated alongside again. "And

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no time for me to think of messages to send and commissions to fill! And going from my very door as it were! Wait over another ship — there 's a youth with a thought for our true welfare! Public business, forsooth! We 're doing very well, and so I make no doubt are they; and that 's all the public business one need to think about. And what is public business to the private one of a bit of cramoisie to match that I brought over with me and hath faded in a spot, — a spot I will show thee anon, my treasure, — where art thou, Content? — ah, you have said good-bye — and going without the wing of a turkey which there is not such another in Salem town this day — though I say it who put the liver under it with my own hands! Well, then, if you must, — Cradock, man, you were always iller to wait for than time or tide! — farewell and come again. This way, Content, I 'm that put about I don't know one door from another, what with dinner ready to sit down to, and Mr. Williams here again, and nobody to say anything of it though all knowing it — Let me take out your comb, my sweet, — you want no help, I see. Well, it does seem as if Mr. Williams did always bring consternation —

though such a reader of the Bible have I never given ear to, since. And I who went to his own house to hear him read it, in the face of my husband's disapproval — I should know — is your father in again? I have questions to ask him — " and Content stood alone, looking out through the latticed panes, down the street, at the vanishing figure of Archer, her fresh lawn neckerchief folded in her hand.

CHAPTER VI

"The hermit of the loneliest solitude,
The silent desert of a great new Thought."

"The enduring half—
Whose choice decides a man life's slave or king."

THE fire leaped about the great log that had been thrown within the chimney-place an hour ago, and that still reckoned on its massive endurance to resist the creeping, crawling demon that sought its destruction. Salome sat within the circle of its illumination, motionless and absorbed as a figure of impartial Fate. Without lay darkness, absolute save for the steady, distant radiance of the stars, and silence, unbroken save by the faint, inconstant wash of the ripple upon the sand. Suddenly the woman raised her head and listened —another sound had crossed and recrossed that of the water. She waited a moment, and then, with her accustomed slow dignity of carriage and gesture, she rose, stepped to the door of the tiny room and flung it open. The light

from the fire danced forth upon the door-stone, but unavailingly lost itself in the clinging darkness beyond. As she stood, her hands folded before her, curiosity nor fear visible in the eyes that seemed to look into the night with a more than ordinary power of seeing, there was an unusual grace in the lines of her splendid figure. Even when dressed in the utmost simplicity of the colonial fashion, she continued always to invest it with something of the exotic; but to-night, the sweeping folds of her dress were of rich lustrous material, and there was a glint of gold where the ends of a scarf of crimson, crape-like substance were caught together across her breast. Every suggestion of her face, her costume, her attitude, was at variance with the straitness of the house, the scantiness of its furnishing, and the utter loneliness of the obscure spring night.

"Welcome," she uttered the word in her low voice whose carrying quality seemed to bear the word into the darkness further than the firelight could penetrate. Still there was no one to be seen, but the sound of steps had grown more distinctly audible. She did not speak again, and in a few moments the figure

of a man drew near out of the darkness, and Williams stepped into the contracted circle of light.

"I thank thee," he said, as with almost foreign courtesy, he bent before her. "I draw near in the darkness and the mystery befitting an exiled man, and I find an open door and a glowing hearthstone, and a welcome that waits not for my challenge. I thank thee again, Mistress Salome." As he entered the house and closed the door behind his hostess and himself, the marks of weariness were on his face, and he moved like one who is travel-worn and would be glad of rest. In silence Salome went about with an air that with all its dignity spoke the pleasure of serving an honored guest. She placed the highbacked chair far enough from the fire to feel its generosity without being oppressed by it, and set a silver tankard of ale upon a rough stand, the product of Copton's ingenuity.

The gleam of the rich plate banished the poverty of its surroundings, and imparted a hint of magnificence to Williams' reception. When all was finished, and Salome seated herself at the other side of the fireplace, and, still

silent, turned her queenly head towards him, the two figures completed the impression of distinction.

"Still chary of thy words, Mistress Salome?" said the man, smiling.

"Not if need call for them," she answered; "but a weary man should have breathing space unhampered by giving change for the silver of speech."

"Not all thy sex have thy tolerance — as I have found in other matters as well," he said, still smiling.

"And have all thine?" she demanded swiftly.

"Nay, verily," he admitted, "I am not able to claim that for the sons of men."

"Then spare their daughters," she admonished.

"The oppressor may well spare when the besieged city hath such defenders," he said dryly. "It is well for us that we are not always kept beyond their tender mercies."

"Thou hast need of kindness," said Salome. "Was not thy welcome ready for thee in Salem town?"

An expression of regret crossed the man's face, and he leaned forward, his elbows on his

knees and his head in his hands, so that his countenance was somewhat hidden.

"There was a welcome for me beyond my deserts," he said slowly; "but not for my conscience' sake could I accept it altogether without bearing witness."

"And thou didst feel called upon to prophesy, and thy prophecy was contention."

"Thou hast been told," he said, looking up at her.

"Yea, I have been told — it is my twenty years' knowledge of Roger Williams that hath told me. When did he not contend?" The faint irony of her tone stung him. He rose and paced the floor.

"You, too!" he exclaimed. "You believe that it is the love of bickering and strife that leads me forth from the congregations of men? That my very soul yearned not after those my people; that I would not fain have bound myself to them with the bond of peace?" and he paused and looked down at her as she listened to him, her eyes holding a faint scepticism in their depths, yet a scepticism not untouched by sympathy. She did not answer, and he turned away again.

"God knoweth," he said, "my heart loveth

them too well to love their errors. It is a burden that He hath laid upon me, and at times it presseth hardly upon weary shoulders."

The sadness of his tone revealed the loneliness so seldom realized by the man himself, but now and then, in rare moods of depression, showing him, in a flash, his own vexed and vexing nature.

Salome could not resist it. She rose too, and laid her hand on his arm. "Yes, God knoweth," she said, "and I know this — that thou art a man upon whom light hath shined, that thy heart is ever tender towards those against whom the elders in our Israel have hardened theirs, and that the privilege and the expiation are alike thine. And as for thy likelihood to contend," her grave lips parted an instant in a swift smile, "surely thou hast a talent — and the napkin in which to hide it is not woven in times like these. Now sit thee down again and give me tidings of thy wife Mary and her children."

"She sendeth thee loving greeting," he said, as he obeyed her, and the harassed lines smoothed themselves out of his forehead, as with an interest and sympathy that would have struck the Reverend Israel Glover as singu-

larly apart from the armed indifference of the woman he longed to discipline, Salome asked him of Recompense and Joy, his children, and led him on to speak of his hopes, his plans, and his dreams for the colony of Providence.

"It is a happy place, believe me, Salome," he said at last; "and if I be somewhat lonely when thoughts of a wider and a more neighborly communion cross my thoughts, then do I comfort myself with the remembrance of those distressed souls who have found there a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and a covert from storm and from rain."

"Would that Mistress Hutchinson had tarried there!"

"Ay, would that she had!" he answered sadly. "There are nights of silence, when the remembrance of the bloody end of that woman of great gifts and of marvellous grace of carriage weighs my spirit down, and I lie awake in a shuddering rebelliousness against the divine decree that let her go forth but to perish."

"And what think you of my nights of silence!" demanded Salome, her eyes kindling with a deep radiance, as she rose suddenly

and stood before him. "Then there come to my ears the cries of the lonely household, though there be no wind abroad! Then I see Anne Hutchinson as I saw her first, sitting under the preaching of the Reverend Mr. Cotton, her face alight with the grace that of a truth dwelt within; or, later, ministering to a sick and dismayed girl whose courage and whose life seemed slipping away together! — and then, I catch a vision of her fleeing from the hand of murderers — and fleeing in vain!" Her usually impassive voice trembled, and she threw her arm up against the side of the chimney-place and rested her head there an instant before she continued, "And the girl whom she brought back from the gates of death was not there to help —"

"Nor to perish with her," interpolated her hearer, gently, "thank God!"

"To perish with her then — nor any hand to minister to her, dying, as she ministered to me and others like me, when death seemed at hand and was not! Small wonder," she added, "that I see visions and dream dreams."

Williams watched her closely, noting the heavy sadness that settled upon her features, usually so immobile in their regular beauty,

and the fire that burned in her eyes. "And who sent her there? Those in authority. Authority! Authority!" she exclaimed passionately, "had we not enough of authority before we crossed the seas?"

"Salome," said Williams, suddenly, "come back with me to Providence Colony."

She raised her head and looked at him questioningly.

"Think you," she asked, "that the raven hath gone out from the Ark of Safety, and wouldst thou summon her back?"

"No raven, but a dove who hath need of her olive branch," he answered, with intention.

Salome's expression lost its intensity, and she resumed the tone of slight irony that was habitual.

"Thou hast heard tales," she said. "What is it they have told thee? That it is strange that a woman should elect to live alone and single; that I be somewhat too — too inclined to errors that have driven greater and wiser from the colony?" — her smile slightly reflected his — "or have they more specific and graver charges? That I know strange properties of herb and root; that I have mysterious visitors? and that somehow,—good men

and women know not how, — I have intelligences and revelations and — only soothsayers, witches and the like know what not?"

Williams moved uneasily.

"Speak not so lightly of witchcraft," he admonished. "It is a word of ill sound to those who have seen the poor creatures tried across the water."

"I fear not the word," said Salome, with the slight shrug that she made so expressive. "Yonder pretty Content hath told thee that I be marvellous wise in many things, and her eyes have looked that wonder that hangs always ready about their lashes; and the worshipful Caleb Cradock hath told thee that it were better I courted not singularity in so manifest a way; and Nishokou hath told thee in his own language that there be naught that one need to tell her whose ears are the ears of the deer, and her eyes the eyes of the eagle; and thou hast heard other and divers reports that have awaked thy apprehensions."

Williams listened to the mocking speech, with its undertone of scorn, with a surprise that those who had known this woman best and longest never wholly shook off. Almost word for word she had given him some of the

comments that, added to his knowledge of her singular independence, had made him uneasy for her future.

"Come back with me to Providence," he repeated. "Mary, my wife, will give thee a warm welcome, and Mary Dyar —"

"Yes, and Mary Dyar —" said Salome, coming nearer, "her name hath been, unuttered, on my lips many times."

"Will give thee room in her house, and thy wisdom will perhaps hold her back from imprudence, while thy tolerance will not strive to quench her spirit."

"Mine is an ancient bond of friendship with Mary Dyar," she said slowly. "I pray no harm come to one so dazzled by what she looks to as the light of morning."

"Thou shalt lead her if she be further blinded."

"Nay, nay," and Salome shook her head; "I must stay here, it is here I have pitched my tent. And who knows," she went on, with her enigmatical smile, "but I might introduce further discord into the diversity of thy manifestations. If I should feel called upon to lift up my voice with my head uncovered, who knows but even the liberal

founder of the colony might see cause for discipline."

A frown flitted across Williams' expressive face, Salome watching it unmoved from her composure.

"'Judge in yourselves: is it becoming that a woman pray unto God uncovered?' says the great Apostle," he answered with a shade of sternness.

"Yea, verily, and 'avoid contentions and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain,' says also the great Apostle. Were it not well to leave to each one his favorite interpretation?" she asked as if in passing curiosity. He started to his feet; but, before he could reply, the satirical voice went on, "And yet perhaps that scandal would be removed from me, for I might find no congregation to disturb. I hear your settlement is in itself something of a scandal among the colonies, inasmuch as it has as yet no meeting-house within its borders."

Williams sank back into his chair.

"It is not always within four walls that a man communes best with his God," he said.

"And truly it were not possible to have four walls for each one of thy communions! Is

Mary, thy wife, admitted now to thine?" the query fell from her calm lips with an indescribable accent.

For the second time that evening a wave of loneliness swept over the man; a regret that it was given to none of his many adversaries to see in his attitude, bowed his head, and when he raised it Salome saw that his eyes were darkened with unshed tears.

She crossed swiftly to his side.

"Forgive my bitter tongue," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder; "when did it not seek a subject for bitterness? — ah, if thou and I can remember a time that — it did not — thou mayst remember too, that if I gibe at loneliness the sword cleaveth my own heart!" Her own eyes were as sad as his, though they held no tears. "And I know that the narrowness of thy communion restricteth not thy love, and that in truth thou belongest to a larger congregation than perhaps our pastors and teachers have knowledge enough to grant thee."

"And yet thou wilt not join it?" asked Williams, looking up at her with his smile of peculiar tenderness.

"Nay," she said again, with an answering smile that had no mockery in its sweetness,

"notwithstanding the tyranny of the Bay, it suiteth, after all, better with my inclination — till it see fit to drive me, too, beyond its borders, to thy asylum."

"These be times of discussion and discontent, and the new Governor is a man of dark nature, wherein things do mightily seethe and burn; but it may be I am apprehensive without just cause. Only remember our welcome waits — while the way lies open to our hearthstone."

Still Salome shook her head lightly, but not ungraciously.

"I may yet feel the hand of discipline," she admitted, as she returned to her former seat. "There is an earnest seeker out of heresy abroad. And that leads me to tell thee what, perchance for thy safety, I should have told thee before. He knoweth of thy presence here, and, if I mistake not, looks upon it as flat rebellion rather than with that side glance of tolerance thy good friends have agreed to cast upon it. Beware lest thy steps be hindered."

"I have been warned," said Williams, "not to outstay the patience of the Bay, and I depart at dawn. And I go alone, for we have sent

young Archer, my beloved companion in vicissitudes, to England."

"To England, young Archer!" Salome repeated thoughtfully.

"We fear certain intrigues and mishaps for our infant colony possible under the new rule that obtaineth, and news that has come since I came hither demands the presence there of a trusty agent. My own going must in any case be much delayed, and young Archer was here and held himself in readiness. It seemed a leading, and I could not gainsay it."

"I had thought there might be other leadings awaiting his perspicacity," she mused. "But a path hath many turnings."

"And who is this seeker out of heresy who hath perceived thy leanings towards danger?" asked Williams.

"The most Reverend Israel Glover — a teacher who hath not yet found the fixed place of his prophesying, and so findeth work to do where his fancy leadeth him. He hath but lately come, and hath brought with him a taste of the methods that drove him over seas."

"Yonder Archbishop infected enemies as well as friends," sighed Williams. "Alas for the household where no love is! — though they

would fain have thee hear them praising God early in the morning."

"And the Lord that delighteth not in burnt sacrifice, *He* will hear them!" said Salome, with stern bitterness, "and for them shall the lion come up from the thicket."

With her last words she crossed the room and set the door open. "It is stifling here," she said; "I made the fire for a greeting rather than a necessity, though the nights are still chill." She returned to her chair again, and there was silence. The open door admitted a current of air grateful to their flushed faces, for the room was very warm; but it admitted too a certain weirdness of suggestion. It was as if some strange guest might slip in unannounced from the darkness without to take his place beside these two striking figures, as they gazed into the fire which threw long shadows behind them and gleamed upon the surface of the silver tankard.

"Salome," said Roger Williams, breaking the silence with his magnetic voice, "Archer has gone to England, and it may be that I shall be called there before we meet again, — if in the providence of God we ever meet again, —and if I am called, I go; manifold changes

are in the air there, and may bring manifold changes here. And if I go, hast thou no message to send?"

Salome's features grew rigid, but she turned her dusky eyes upon the speaker.

"I have no message."

"Not if it be for his soul's good?" he asked gently.

"His soul is not mine to benefit," she answered, without a flicker of emotion; "neither do I greatly think it is his to be saved. He parted with it, methinks, fifteen years ago."

"That is not for thee to say."

"Let him say it who will, or leave it unsaid, I care not," she said, indifferent to the reproof. "I have no message."

"It may be he knew not the furrow that the ploughshare should cut when he turned back his hand."

"He left the field for the house of feasting, and others have gotten the harvest."

"It is no longer the house of feasting — remember that. For him and for such as he, there may be bitter mourning."

"I go not beyond the hour of his choice."

"You are hard, Salome."

"Yes, I am hard."

He rose to his feet and passed his hand over his forehead.

"My word is spoken," he said, "and I go. Once more, hast thou no message?"

"Yes," exclaimed Salome; "since thou hast come for it at much risk and small profit, I will send a word. Say to him," — and she caught up a Bible from the table and rapidly turned its leaves, — "say to him this, 'Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.'" The syllables fell clearly in her unshaken tones, and ceased. Williams turned away, and Salome stood, the book still open in her hand, her red scarf falling from her shoulders and stirring slightly in the draught from the open door. There was the soft tread of a light foot without, and Nishokou stood in the doorway.

"His white brother seeketh the friend of the Indian," he said in his own language to Williams. "I know not if in peace or enmity, so I have come another way to tell thee."

"It must be Caleb Cradock," said Williams, turning to Salome. Nishokou shook his head.

"Rather the Reverend Mr. Glover," she said, watching the Indian's face. "Ah, I thought so — and that he comes in peace I

much doubt. Go forth into the forest, Nishokou, and take another trail than that of this white brother." The Indian nodded, and Roger Williams made ready to accompany him.

"It will not brook delay," he said; "and I know I am in the wrong, which gives no strength and it come to disputation," and he smiled; "so I will find my way hence by the other path." He held out his hand in farewell. "I came to thee in some loneliness of spirit — yea, in some faint misgivings, lest I followed too closely the light of my own conscience — that to be less a rock of offence, it were well for me something to dissemble. But thou hast comforted me by thy friendliness, and even thy bitterness hath had its lesson. God grant," and he raised his eyes and his hand towards Heaven, with that look of consecration that marked the man in his exalted moments, "that I, His humble servant, be not disobedient to the heavenly vision! Farewell." And the two men went out into the darkness.

Salome stood listening to their departing footsteps; and it was with a faint sigh of relief that she heard them die away, and knew that very soon the wayfarers would be within the

patch of the woods that lay not far from her dwelling. She was still standing there, when steps were heard from the opposite direction. Her expression lost its strained attention, and was as imperturbable as ever, as Glover strode out of the darkness with a constable by his side.

"You have a distinguished visitor to-night," he said sternly.

"Yes," said Salome, graciously, moving aside that he might enter, "the Reverend Mr. Glover. Truly it is an honor that he seeks this humble roof again so soon, though not without the protection of the law, I perceive, lest there be spells in the air —"

"Cease your jeers!" he commanded, while his keen eyes took in every corner of the room, which offered not the slightest chance of concealment.

"Where is yon rebel," he demanded, turning to her, "who dares —" and his words died upon his lips as he met her tranquil gaze. The superb dignity of her appearance silenced him like a hand laid suddenly upon his mouth. Was this the woman who lived alone and in unassuming poverty? Was he a pastor and a teacher armed with the majesty of ecclesiastical authority? The silken folds of her dress

swept the rush-strewn floor as grandly as though they fell upon a marble pavement. The rich crimson of her drapery glowed in the changing reflections of the fire, and the gold of her girdle gleamed as she moved slightly, to face him more directly. His world trembled on its foundations; the daughter of Heth, cowering beneath the frown of one of the chosen household, had become a princess tolerating the presence of an unfriendly ambassador. New experiences seem longer than they are.

"Where is Roger Williams?" he asked hoarsely; while the constable quietly removed the physical power of the law outside the door, feeling that the crisis was diplomatic rather than active.

"He has gone," replied Salome; "and you will not find him."

"You are confident, Mistress Salome."

"Yes, I am confident," she assented, as calmly as a few moments earlier she had accepted another accusation.

He chafed against her tone; but he could not resist the influence that she carried with her, that influence that said that she knew where others could only guess.

"And you boast of protecting one who defies the commonwealth, — a rebel who accepts not the consecration of the ministers of God!" he demanded, making an effort to regard this woman as she ought to be regarded.

"Did I boast?" she queried indifferently. "But I grant you the word, — I boast of having sheltered Roger Williams. Come in, Crackston," she said to the constable, "it is a dark night to be stalking a weary man — come in, and have fire and light while you may."

Much disconcerted by this mild but unexpected address, Crackston murmured something that might have been thanks, but which manifested, also, a preference for staying where he was, and sank down in an embarrassed manner upon the door-sill. Crackston was a person of great importance, and he had not in the least meant to sit down in the present discharge of his official duty, so that Glover felt his yielding conduct to be inadequate to the occasion, and of the nature of a defection. "Beware, lest thou too become a rebel like that man!" exclaimed the angry clergyman, wrestling with something threatening which yet he did not comprehend. Salome shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"Not like that man," she said; "I love not my enemies well enough for that."

For an instant longer they faced each other; and then, half stifled by his wrath, dizzied by this new taunting emotion that seemed to thrill through the air, surrounding the mysterious beauty of this woman, Glover, without a glance behind him, strode out through the doorway, scarcely leaving time for Crackston, who was entirely unprepared for the tactics of retreat, to roll awkwardly out of the way, ere he picked himself up, and, with a clumsy bow to Salome, followed his superior.

"'Behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you,'" muttered the Reverend Mr. Glover, as he stumbled hastily on in the darkness; "'serpents, cockatrices, — which will not be charmed, — and they shall bite you — they shall bite you, — saith the Lord!'"

CHAPTER VII

"In the old days of awe and keen-eyed wonder."

"For in our likeness still we shape our Fate."

THE fickle warmth and underlying chill of the New England spring had given place to the burning, glowing beauty of its summer. Content sat under one of the trees of thickest shade, leaning back against its lowest branch, where it drooped nearest the earth, her hands fallen, with their work, into her lap in the idleness of the throbbing heat of a July afternoon. Timothy, with the unquenchable activity of childhood, was playing on the grass before her. He was a child of remarkable grace and dignity; in the severe simplicity of his odd little garments, and the elderly flavor of his speech, there was a suggestion of courtliness that was neither affected nor conscious, and that seldom failed to impress an observer, though, according to the spirit of the time, little apparent notice was vouchsafed him. It was with her usual pleasure in his quaintness that his sister watched, this afternoon, the process

of shoeing an imaginary horse with an imaginary bellows, an imaginary forge, a bit of wood for a shoe, and a stone for an anvil. It was really a pretty piece of pantomime, and, if the two young Puritans had but realized it, they were dangerously near to the play-acting which delighted the degenerate. The imaginary horse was a restless brute, and Timothy, planting his short legs well apart, braced himself for the arduous task of keeping him quiet with one hand, while he heated his implements with the other.

"Whoa, whoa! Have a care with thy hind feet," he exhorted; "'t is for thy good, I tell thee. Softly, now!"

"It is the flies that makes him restless this hot day," said Content, smiling.

"If thou wouldst but wave this branch to keep them off, the job would be an easier one," said Timothy, promptly taking advantage of her awakened interest, — it was not too often that his elders joined in his plays, — and he handed her a little twig, which she waved once or twice in indolent acquiescence.

"Now, stand!" he went on resolutely, while he heated a bit of stick upon a convenient boulder. "Nay, toss not thy head and neigh! — the iron is well-nigh hot. Thou shalt pay me well, neighbor," he continued to

the horse's owner, who stood not far from them, in what must have been a negligent attitude, since he took no pains to control his animal, "an thou teach him not to stand better."

"He hath a fine black mane and tail," said Content, admiringly. Timothy paused long enough to cast a judicial glance into space.

"Well enough, well enough," he admitted grudgingly; "but 't is a horse's hoofs that I think the most on," and he dropped the bridle, and struck mighty blows upon his primitive anvil. There was no sound under the trees, save the murmur of insects, and now and then a shout, tempered by distance, from the nearest haying field; there was no sight but grass and trees, and the child of serious deportment, and the fair young girl with smiling lips, waving, at careless intervals, a leafy twig; but, in the blessed light of imagination, there was active, stirring excitement, satisfying labor, and deserved success. Horse, neighbor, hammer, anvil, bridle, and forge were visible enough to the participants, yet the only bit of realism was the hot air that brooded over the earth, and might have been breathed forth from the open door of a veritable furnace.

"Is thy horse not shod yet, sweetheart?" asked Content, dropping the twig, and rising

to her feet; "or shall I frighten him with this wave of my white apron?" and she shook some bits of thread from her dress. "Methinks I can minister no longer to his comfort and thy convenience." The atmospheric oppression made her restless; there were clouds in the west, perhaps there was a storm in the

"He is a very son of Belial, that horse of thine."

air. Timothy dropped his hammer to catch the bridle of the startled beast, which reared and plunged and became well-nigh unmanageable; and before he had leisure to answer his sister, a slow voice spoke from the road behind them.

"He is a very son of Belial, that horse of thine," it said; "I can see it by his eye. Look carefully that he bite not as well as

kick!" and Dégory Copton's inexpressive and vacant little orbs looked beyond the human beings to the noble animal.

"I will give heed," said Timothy, briefly. He and Copton understood each other perfectly, having a number of tastes in common. Content turned to the newcomer with a smile.

"Good-day, Degory," she said. "Do you think a storm lies in yonder clouds? Thou art weather-wise, and I will take thy word for the matter. Shall I go hence to Mistress Salome's without a wetting?"

Copton's pale eyes jerked from one point of the compass to another.

"By the feel of the air, and the looks of such things as be visible, I think there be things invisible at hand," he remarked with the obscurity of the prophet. "An you want my advice, Mistress Content, you will bide, and leave Mistress Salome alone till another day."

Content leaned back against the tree again. "It is a hot sun yet," she said indolently, "and the road is unshaded." Her slight figure, clad in a simple white gown, swayed a little with the branch which just felt her weight, and she looked cool and dainty and unruffled, notwithstanding her evident restlessness.

"And speaking of things invisible," went on Degory, resting his arms on the top rail of the fence, and one foot on the lowest, and pushing back his hat from his corrugated brow, "hast heard of the ship they have seen in New Haven harbor?"

"No," said Content, with some indifference; "has New Haven Colony seen no ships hitherto?"

"None like this," said Copton, mysteriously; "an if verily they have seen this, there be some question."

"Get on with thy tale," urged Content, "for that it is a tale, I plainly perceive, though thou art not wont to cross and recross in this manner, with speech of things visible that be not seen, and things invisible that be perceived in New Haven harbor."

"Thou hast a mocking tongue, Mistress Content," said Degory, without resentment; "and if I pick not up here and there a turn of language that confuseth the simple, what should a poor man like me have to show for his dwelling in the Bay!"

"Verily, thou wilt confuse the simple," and Content threw a warning glance in the direction of Timothy, who had abandoned his manual labor for intellectual pleasure, and stood

gravely listening to every word that fell from Copton's lips. Most people felt an impulse to reprove Copton at one time or another, yet few found it perfectly easy to say for what, so disarming was the vacancy of his expression.

"I am telling thee about the ship, Master Blacksmith," said Copton, undisturbed by criticism; "a ship that was sent out by our neighbors of New Haven Colony — and when I tell thee they sent it out, be sure all things were done with an eye on Holy Writ even to the tassels of the tabernacle."

"The tabernacle of the Most High," observed Timothy, with the utmost gravity of comment.

"Even so. She set sail in January, as they tell me, in the bitter cold — and cold is cold on a ship's deck, with seventy souls aboard; and since then nor word nor message has come from her to those who sent her forth, until —" Copton paused. The girl's eyes were fixed on his face with startled attention; Timothy was lending his ears with critical seriousness; a light-minded grasshopper chirped loudly at their feet.

"Until?" repeated Content.

"Until last month, — a warm day in June, — when those who were looking saw her com-

ing up New Haven harbor, with one officer aboard. No sailors to cast the anchor, or reef the sails, nor yet no passengers to wave a greeting nor," his voice dropped a tone lower, "a farewell; no man at the helm, and yet she sailed steadily into the harbor with one officer on her deck." Content moved a little restlessly, the monotony of the recital jarred on her nerves. "And the officer was leaning on his sword, and gave no word of command, only, they do say, as saw, that he looked heavily, as one in sorrow, towards the shore. And then, in sight of them all, she sank, — sank as though she was gripped fast from beneath, and the water went over her, and the harbor was empty as before."

"And what of the seventy souls?" inquired Timothy.

Copton looked over to the horizon, and back again to Timothy.

"Them as careth for souls, be it for good or bad," he answered, "they be the ones that know."

Content stood upon her feet, and picking up her sunbonnet put it on her head.

"I like not tales of phantom ships," she said.

The air was heavier and more oppressive, unseen influences seemed crowding upon her. Timothy, however, was quite free from any

unpleasant impression. To his inexperience, it appeared to be a no more unusual manifestation than many others, the source of daily allusion in the colony. A phantom ship by day and a pillar of fire by night were, for all he could see, equally evident and equally acceptable to those who knew about such things.

"I want no job aboard of such," admitted Degory.

"Did the one officer set sail and mind the wheel?" inquired Timothy, who was collating impressions.

"If the sails were set, he must have set them, and if the wheel turned, it must have been under his hand. Whither goest thou, Mistress Content?"

"To see Mistress Salome," she answered briefly.

"The storm, methinks, is not far off," observed the man.

"Nor is her house," she said, moving towards the gate.

Degory watched her slight figure disappear through the mist of dust in the direction of the water-side.

"An I be not at fault, it will be a wetter road she comes back over," he said; "but,

Timothy, you and I be old enough to know better than to give a young woman any advice but what she be inclined to follow, an we would keep our reputation for wisdom." Timothy nodded.

"I don't know many old womans," he remarked with that confidential air which made his lightest conversation flattering; "but I know one or two old mans beside you. My grandmother was an old woman. I think grandmothers be generally old," advancing this latter theory with entire readiness to hear anything that might be said on the other side. Copton took the observations as they were meant, as a conversational opening, and, slowly climbing over the rail, sat down by Timothy on the grass.

It was not long before Content felt that possibly the impulse which had driven her forth would better have been restrained. The clouds rolled up from the horizon and darkened with ominous swiftness, before she had reached the path leading to Salome's cottage. The oppression she had vainly tried to shake off, grew heavier. The picture of the ship going down into the deep waters with its solitary guardian haunted her with its suggestions,

both natural and supernatural. So had ships gone down, alas! with those that set sail in them — whom nor youth nor strength were able to save! Was it possible that so they reappeared? Her eyes turned towards the water, which lay in smooth gray streaks like strata of slate under the wind. The pale under-sides of the leaves of the trees were all visible, as though they blanched at the approach of the tempest. But still the rain held off, and Content flew over the path. She was lightly dressed; she felt singularly frail and alone; and the clouds held vague threats of destruction. As she drew near the house, her head bowed against the force that well-nigh flung her back, she did not see another figure coming rapidly along the sand from the other direction. Indeed, it was not until they both had almost reached the door-stone that she looked up and recognized the young man Stukely. He was a few steps in advance of her, and he waited courteously, as he had done before, to let her pass him on the way to the house. He was more debonair than ever; the wind tossed the fripperies of his costume, but failed to disturb the confidence of his glance. For a breathing space the girl paused involuntarily, as she saw

him; but the wind, as well as her own dignity, bade her go on, and with a slight inclination she passed him as he stood with bared head, his locks ruffled into disorder. As he turned to follow her within, again Content paused, and the two stood a moment together sheltered by the house and looking into the room, for the door was wide open, and at her wheel, as usual, sat Salome. Though the wind was strong, it was not boisterous, and though the limbs of the trees were tossing wildly and there were rough lines of white, shattering the smooth slate of the water, it was a very silent storm as yet, and, across its murmur, Salome's voice fell with peculiar insistence as she sang in a low contralto to the whirring of the wheel, —

"'Go, Love, go! for Love is unkind.'
But Love came again,
With the rush of the rain,
On the breath of the wind."

As Stukely bent his head forward and caught the melody, he raised his handsome brows and smiled as though in recognition of a familiar air, and then waited quietly for his companion to make the first move. Meanwhile he watched the storm and enjoyed the situation; the ten-

sity of the atmosphere, the neighborhood of the fair girl, who though standing so near him, and in a sense his companion, contrived to let him feel an impassable distance between them. Content, with a relief from the panic of a few moments earlier, watched the storm also.

"'Go, Life, go ! for Life is unkind.'
But Life brought its pain,
With the rush of the rain,
On the breath of the wind."

As Salome sang these next lines, to her surprise, Content caught Stukely's voice in a low accompaniment, which showed his acquaintance with words and music. She did not look towards him, but she heard each syllable as it fell softly from his lips. The room had grown suddenly darker; vivid flashes of lightning sawed their way through the bare gray masses of cloud to the blue-gray sea, but the thunder was still very low and distant. The little house seemed more isolated than ever in the pregnant stillness, and its occupants, temporary and trivial. Earth, skies, and sea sent forth the impression that they were fighting out the quarrel on their own lines, without heed to the pettiness of human beings. Once a min-

ute, or oftener, came the sudden, swift onslaught of the wind, and all the leaves and weeds and grasses bent and flattened wildly, as if they were beseeching, rebelling, but clinging tightly to the earth, though almost losing their faith in its firm hold, while the moment of struggle lasted. Again and again the shafts of lightning plunged into the sea. Nature hurling itself against nature, but without outcry.

"'Come, Death, come! for Death may be kind.'
But I called Death in vain,
With the rush of the rain,
On the breath of the wind."

Then broke forth the hissing of the sharp shower, and Salome turned toward her visitors.

"So young Mr. Stukely still lingers in these barren colonies," she said, as easily as if their conversation had begun moments earlier. "He sees them to-day in one of their most unfriendly moods. Content, child, thou didst get in but in season to avoid a wetting. Where is the wisdom of thy natural protectors that they let thee leave home?"

"In truth, Goodman Copton's words of warning followed me," answered Content, smiling, "but I persisted."

"Mistress Content Cradock, let me present to thee young Mr. Cyprian Stukely," said Salome, with a change to her grand manner, which, with all its dignity, seldom lost entirely a tinge of irony, "late of our mother country beyond seas, now testing the slender resources of those her children who have been cast out to seek otherwheres their bed and board."

"Nay, nay, I gainsay thee!" exclaimed Stukely, bestowing on Content another of the graceful salutes with which she began to feel familiar. "Never was the mother country so blind as to cast forth from her borders such a daughter as Mistress Cradock! Slander her not, Mistress Salome! — though verily —" and he shrugged his shoulders with a swift change to the bitterness of contempt, "what she does now, nor I, nor any gentleman may predict, seeing she be handed over to a company of low-born ranters who, it may be, would toss away the flower of beauty, with the jewels of royalty and dignity!"

"Have thou a care," admonished Salome, calmly, as she moved forward the rush-bottomed chairs; "thou art now in a land where psalm-singing doth not unfit men for high places, and crown jewels have somewhat lost

their brilliancy, being flecked with the blood of the saints."

Stukely looked at her a few moments through his half-closed eyes, without speaking; and she answered his glance with one which, for all its lurking amusement, was as haughty as his own.

"I stand reproved," he said with a gesture of affected humility. "This is not the place, I see, to shout the praises of thy country and mine. It becomes not the stranger to cherish allegiance to the sovereign to whom thy rulers also owe fealty!" Content listened with kindling eyes. Her antagonism to this young trifler revived with new force. She recalled her last meeting with him; and the man who had been her companion then seemed the more earnest and the more purposeful by contrast.

"And thou wouldst have us lift up our voices to lament that the measure they meted to us hath been meted to them again?" she demanded, her voice raised that it might be heard above the sound of the noisy rain. "And that the strong hand hath curbed the passionate strokes of oppression?"

"And thou, too, fair mistress!" exclaimed

Stukely, turning towards her, while Salome watched her with the smile a mother yields the precociousness of her child. "What can a man do but strike his colors in the presence of such odds? But verily this is an iron country! I expected not to hear the sweet lips of its daughters uttering approval of murder."

"I approve no murder," asserted Content, her cheeks flushing crimson. "I would Charles Stuart were alive again; but I see not that God hath made one law for the oppressed and yet another for the oppressor."

"The sweet lips of the daughters of New England are seldom found without an answer, Master Stukely," observed Salome, dryly. "It is well for thee to remember that there be here few voices without signification."

"Small wonder," he answered with deliberate utterance, "that there be some who, affrighted by the rigors of argument falling from a woman's lips, however fair, seek peace where soft voices raise not the cry of rebellion."

The room was nearly dark, for the tempest was at its height, and the silence that ensued was shattered by a crash of thunder. Content

turned, half in affright, towards Salome, and the superb disdain in her white face, startlingly visible in the shadow, banished her own apprehension with a shock of surprise. It was as if she had not even heard the thunder; her shining eyes were fixed on Stukely, whose own eyes showed anger, though his lips kept their careless smile.

"Yes, it is well," she said slowly, as the thunder died away; "we have no place for cowards here."

Content saw that there was a feeling on the part of the speaker that the words did not express, and the moment that followed seemed to her tense with something beside the power of the storm.

"Did you think I was afraid?" she asked Salome, half laughing, as much to break the silence as to defend herself. "Truly I think I was not altogether free from a touch of apprehension that the thunder would knock the house about our ears. But, believe me, I am not altogether a coward, though I start at such a commotion of the elements."

"That will I protest against all accusers, Mistress Cradock," said Stukely, with a change of tone that was flattery in itself; "for have

I not seen you in the midst of commotion truly as dire as that which is now abroad, only that it was that of the elements of opinion and faith and what not, — and, I warrant you, Mistress Salome, her cheek was not blanched, though a timid onlooker like myself had apprehensions of a most serious nature!"

Salome, without heeding or apparently hearing his address to her, rose and busied herself in another part of the room.

"For surely it was you," he went on to Content, "that I saw in Salem meeting-house listening to Mr. Roger Williams and his friends — who yet were his adversaries."

"Yes, I was there; and Mr. Stukely must pardon me," Content added demurely, "if I failed to observe upon his part that timidity which he has just assured us was really upon his spirit."

"Ah, well, it may be that you are right in thinking it were meeter had it been more in evidence — "

"I said not so."

"No, but there be some thoughts that be easy of reading; for, truly, I was in the presence of men skilled in debate, and of one man, at least, who has won the respect of even those

who find not his dialectics altogether to their taste, — this same Mr. Williams."

Content regarded him in amazement. His whole manner had altered from that of its half insolence on the day he referred to, as from that of the cynicism that had crossed swords with Salome's once or twice that very afternoon.

"I expected not such a tribute to Mr. Williams from one of your attachment to what he has long cast off," she said.

"And may not a man of judgment respect the powers of one who putteth them forth on what, in that judgment, is the wrong side? And that Roger Williams be a man of power, the most frivolous of courtiers may be allowed to perceive."

The brief summer storm was breaking; the room was growing lighter as the thunder grew less frequent and more distant. Content and Stukely were talking practically alone. Salome did not even look towards them.

"He is a man who hath often won the fair words of his adversaries," said Content, thoughtfully.

The change in her companion's manner softened her former resentment.

"And why not? Who but must admire his boldness as well as his attainments? He is no ignorant caviller, though he rejoice in attack rather than defence. It is more than a lurking admiration that one feels for a man under a ban coming back in the light of day and facing those who have cause to wish him ill."

"It was an incautious thing; but he has good friends among even the authorities, and he counted on the general commotion and anxiety attendant on the death of Governor Winthrop, and the presence of many strangers, to go and come without too much heed paid to his defiance of authority; so he told my father, with whom," concluded Content, smiling, "though he blamed Mr. Williams' temerity, it would have gone hard ere he had been forced to expiate it."

"That is one thing in this new country," said Stukely, thoughtfully, "that one finds in unstinted measure, and a more than transient meaning — friendship! It bears a most generous construction among men like those you speak of."

"And where would you think to find it with a more enduring meaning than among

those who have ventured together, prayed together, suffered together, and triumphed together!" exclaimed Content, warmly.

"True," he answered gravely, watching the effect of her own feeling upon the girl, over whom the light from the breaking clouds fell through the open door, and whose light dress the cooling breeze following the storm blew softly across his feet. "Yet it is but as an outsider that I can see the truth, alas! for it is but a meagre measure that one like myself is allowed to find!"

Before she could speak, while she was yet almost startled into sympathy by the regret that seemed to penetrate his words, he went on, "And where may the young Puritan be who escorted Mistress Content Cradock that day through Salem Street? Is he perhaps her brother? Or was his good fortune but incidental to time and place?"

The color grew a little deeper in Content's warm cheeks.

"He is not my brother," she replied; "but young Mr. Archer of Providence, now gone to England at the behest of Mr. Williams and others."

"Ah! if he be not your brother," said

Stukely, lightly, "then I may say that methought there was a certain truculency in his bearing that would single him out as a man meet for dealing with those who hold themselves his superiors, now in England."

The implied criticism vexed her; but there was not the same freedom in defending Archer that there was in the case of more conspicuous men. Moreover, there had been a hint of implication in the transition from friendship on general grounds to the particular case of young Mr. Archer which had not escaped her.

"He hath been Mr. Williams' companion in adversity, as well as in such prosperity as hath been his," she observed, while her thoughts reverted to Archer's enthusiasm with a flash of sympathy.

"And well might there be something assuming in the bearing of a stern young councillor weighted with cares of state, to the careless eyes of one who would push such heavy matters aside with a foot prone to easier paths," said Stukely, his handsome eyes seeking hers, "even had he not the added responsibility of guarding safely through the perils of Salem so precious a companion."

The ironical tone did not please Content, though there was a scarcely disguised envy audible through the last words that it is not in the heart of woman altogether to withstand.

"There is one fashion, Mistress Salome," she said, turning from him to their hostess, "that Mr. Stukely hath not yet caught from us of New England."

"There is more than one," answered Salome; "but what is it that is evident to thy special observation?"

"He talks of perils where there be none; we have had them without our doors too many times to see them in the midst of safety."

Stukely's dark cheek flushed; and for an instant the studied indifference of his manner gave way under the sting of the gently spoken words.

"Methinks it hath not been the part of Cyprian Stukely to shrink from perils, seen or unseen," he said hotly. "But," he added a second later, with a return to his usual manner which cost him some effort, "I should not be unwilling to dream of them if, by so doing I might win the privilege of guarding Mistress Cradock against them in any path she may choose."

Perhaps neither of the women liked him the less for his momentary loss of temper.

"Believe me, she would rely upon Mr. Stukely's fitness for the task, should need arrive," said Content, courteously. Her smile was so kind that, under its influence, he went further than his calm judgment would have pronounced discreet.

"And are there not dangers on thy homeward way this afternoon?" he demanded, for Content had risen. "See, the sun shines forth, but with a light that will soon waver."

The mistress of the house stepped forward.

"And as thou art the greatest stranger, and dost but tarry in the town for a few days," she observed dryly, "it were well to turn thy steps thitherward; as for Mistress Cradock, I have as yet had few words with her, and she needs not to hasten." It was difficult to ignore so palpable a hint.

"I go, I go!" exclaimed Stukely, seizing his hat with a despatch that made even Salome smile. "Send not for the constable, good Mistress Salome! I know not all your new fashions, but there is one that obtaineth in the old world as well as in the new, — when a

lady sends thee from her threshold it is better manners to do her bidding without argument."

With a hasty but still graceful gesture of farewell, the young man stepped out upon the wet sand, the two women watching him go,— one of them, at least, finding it difficult to analyze precisely what impression he had left behind him.

"The youth hath other qualities than those that he most evidenced three months agone in Salem meeting-house," said Salome, at last.

Content glanced at her, the words had been upon her own lips.

"Who and what may he be?" she asked.

"Who he is, you may see, — a young English gallant who hath not over much respect for a new country having neither king nor bishop — and yet, methinks, would perhaps die in their behalf, rather from instinct and training than from any great love either for bishop or king — and who hath not learned altogether to curb his tongue or suit his temper to his needs. What he may be — that I think he knows not altogether himself, nor the mother that bore him, for it lieth in the future, and —" she paused, and added in another tone, "and the future keepeth its secrets."

So inscrutable, and yet so calm and confident was the woman's gaze that, notwithstanding her words, her listener caught the swift impression that the future held for her fewer secrets than for most human beings; how much or how little the diffusion of this impression was the result of Salome's will, those who received it could never be entirely sure.

Content stepped to the open door; the setting sun threw its last rays across the wet sand, the low dripping herbage, and the troubled waters, and she gazed upon them in silence; her restlessness had passed away with the storm; but still there was an unanswered question in her heart. "And the sea keeps its secrets, too," said Salome, as if to herself. Content turned to her quickly, meeting the older woman's watching eyes.

"Not always," she said.

There was an instant's pause, in which Salome did not take her eyes from the girl's face.

"So they have told thee of the phantom ship," she said, looking away from her to the sea; "it were as well not, perhaps."

"And what think you?" Content's voice

trembled slightly. "Was it a real ship — or was it — but — a — vision?"

"A real thing or a vision," repeated Salome. "It must be a wiser one than I to tell you whereabouts in the real a vision begins. And how should I know? Thinkest thou I saw it?"

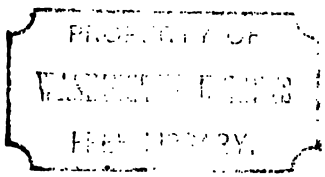
As her eyes fell again upon Content's, the girl started; they appeared to meet hers and to pass on with so searching a gaze that it seemed impossible that it was into blank space only that they looked. And then abruptly, without an answer, she went back to her spinning wheel, and, in her low, sweet voice, the song began a second time, —

"'Go, Love, go! for Love is unkind.'
But Love came again,
With the rush of the rain,
On the breath of the wind."

Content lingered till the last words fell upon her ears with a wistful insistence, and the whirring of the wheel alone filled the air; then, accepting her dismissal, she slowly left the house and turned homeward, catching from the path the voice of Salome as she began the next verse, —

"'Go, Life, go! for Life is unkind.'"

The question she had half intended to ask was still unuttered, but her faith in Salome's power to answer it mysteriously strengthened. Since this wise woman had given her no warning, she would believe that Resolved Archer was safe, though phantom ships thronged the harbor.



CHAPTER VIII

"How many subtlest influences unite
With spiritual touch of joy or pain,
Invisible as air and soft as light,
To body forth that image of the brain
We call our Country."

"That is best blood that has most iron in it
To edge resolve with."

IT was a scene of decorous festivity, but it was of festivity none the less. The union of beauty, youth, and love is not to be rendered an occasion of gloom by any inexorabilities of custom or by the absence of a ring or other symbolism; the essentials were here, and the Puritan respect for essentials never failed. The simple wedding ceremony had been performed by the magistrate, and the sound of laughter, and the merry voices of women came through the open windows of the house, mingled with the deeper tones of men, the sternest of whom looked with kindness upon the bride and groom whom the anxiety

of the times had not been able to discourage in their pursuit of happiness.

Outside, in the shadow of the house, sat Copton and Crackston the constable, for the humbler friends of the household had been bidden to the feast, as well as the aristocracy, — as real an aristocracy as that which had been left behind, when it crossed the Atlantic.

"That 's what she said to him," remarked Crackston, knocking his pipe on an adjacent stone. "Those be the words she used, so far as I can recollect."

"And words, I take it, that were more gentle in the sound of them, as it were, than in their bearing," observed Copton.

"It seemed so to me," assented the constable, thoughtfully, as one forced by his profession to maintain a judicial attitude. "It seemed so to me. And if I 'm not out in my reckonin'," and he glanced over his shoulder to see that they were practically alone, "the Reverend Mr. Glover took 'em that way himself. I suppose he 's preached lovin' your enemies before; but I 've noticed — and my walk in life bein' one as has always encouraged me to take notice, I suppose I 've noticed more 'n a good many — such as you who

don't have so much call or occasion for noticin' — "

"Notice is a thing that is not altogether awry in any calling," observed Copton, dryly.

"No, but mine bein' such as it is, there be more call after a manner — "

"I grant you," interrupted Copton, puffing a little impatiently at his pipe; "get on, man, get on!"

"Well, I 've noticed," continued Crackston, placidly, who, though dignified, was not resentful, "that there 's what you might call a sight of difference from preachin' and bein' preached at."

"I don't know but what there is," and Degory's automatic eyes moved to Crackston's face and away again, while his thin mouth, with its network of fine lines at the corners, widened into a grin of private appreciation.

"And she lookin' him straight in the face, no more afeared of him, minister though he be — though of course not havin' the weight of a parish at his back — than — than — " Crackston paused for a suitable standard of comparison.

"Than thyself," suggested the other, his eyes looking particularly vacant. As Crackston

did not reply, he continued, with misleading naïveté, "And of course, being a constable and in the lawful discharge of thy duty, there was naught for thee to be afeared on."

The judicial attitude triumphed. Dearly would Crackston have loved to assure this friend whom he knew to be by nature sceptical, of his flawless audacity; but a man whose guide is impartial justice must never let go her garments.

"Afeared of him I was not in any way of bodily violence," he answered, as he moved into the sunshine, for the afternoon was waning, and he courted not unnecessary exposure. "But I will say freely, that I should not have cared to hear him calling me 'rebel' and such like terms as he flung at the presence of Mistress Salome. The thunders of Sinai," admitted this reasonable person, "be the thunders of Sinai." Copton nodded. So far the argument was irrefutable. "And, furthermore,—is not that Mistress Dotey of Salem coming out there into the porch?" Crackston paused to inquire.

Degory turned himself somewhat stiffly to look at the ample proportions of that lady, as she stepped out of the house in all the glory

of rustling silk, embroidered stomacher, and elaborate coif.

"That be truly Mistress Dotey and no other; and the one who follows is Mistress Cradock, the mother of young Timothy, who hath a wit and an understanding overmatching those of some of his elders."

"I know them of the Cradock household. The worshipful Caleb Cradock and I have consulted oft," returned Crackston, with dignity.

"A fine young man, and looking as if he knew well what a good thing he had found,— for that a good wife be a good thing not even thou, Caleb Cradock, who art over-apt to question and doubt, and deal in niceties of opinion, will deny; and deny it thou wouldst not dare with thy wife standing here, looking not so much older than when thou didst tell me— nay, shake not thy head at me, Elizabeth, I have a mind to say what I think and I have eyes to see, and so, I warrant me, has your worshipful husband here, with all that his thoughts be so much bent upon the things not of this world and the anxieties of the times."

The soft current of Mistress Dotey's speech rippled through the still air to the ears of the

two men as they sunned themselves. "In faith, am I weary of the anxieties of the times; it is a pleasure to come to a wedding and to see smiles on young faces, and to know that there be carelessness — well, well! — a certain carelessness — I tell thee I hold to the word carelessness! — of what may come to-morrow; and if I had my own way it is not I that would say that a fiddler — I take it back, Caleb Cradock, an thou look at me like that — thou hast a most dismaying glance! I say then, nothing of a reel or so — but that the bridegroom is a personable young man and hath a certain look of that other that went so hurriedly to England from my own doorway, as it were, and never tarried till I might give him a bit of cramoisie, that he might bring back to me its like! What was it — Resolved Archer? Yes, that is the name, young Archer. Well, yonder bridegroom hath a certain look of him, and there is but one other man in yonder room that carries such a — well, such a look as would have pleased me in my young days, and thee too, Elizabeth, ere we made our choice — and that is young Stukely — oh, I know he hath dangerous opinions and what not — "

"He is a malcontent," said Cradock, with brief sternness, "and holdeth not church membership."

"Well, I uphold not his way of thinking; but I was sorry when he left Salem for Boston, for there was a certain lightness of carriage as he passed my window now and again, a grace of salute — oh, no, I am delighting not in the legs of a man, no more than trusting in a horse for safety, Caleb Cradock, and that my husband will tell thee he hath ever greater ado to lead me into! — but even a church member may see that some things are good, that — are they moving towards the dining-room? Let us go within then; and there is Joseph Dotey coming to seek me, and —" and the current of speech ceased to ripple through the outside air, and each of the two men changed his position a little as if a tension had been relaxed.

"Mistress Dotey is a good woman," said Copton, who was apt to voice the sentiments of an informal occasion like the present; "and she's a woman that a silk gownd and a lace cap do marvellous become; but there's that about her do always turn my thoughts towards that woman living up Agawam way,—she that

was named Comfort in baptism, and hath no roof to her mouth, thus being denied the favor of speech."

Crackston nodded to show that appreciation lagged not behind.

"And as I was sayin'," he went on, with that persistent attention to the subject of discussion which had helped to make him the valuable man he was, "there is that about yonder Mistress Salome that makes a man as it were unwilling to set himself against her will;" he paused and looked tentatively at Degory, who nodded in his turn. "I go not with those who say she hath too much knowledge, that being not a happening in the way of womankind, and since, if she had, it is ever for good not evil; but — Copton, man, hadst seen her that night! — I tell thee Mistress Dotey's silken gownd is but a clumsy thing, though it cost a pretty penny, to what Mistress Salome stood in — and I was that overcome by the bravery of her apparel — that I — I give up."

The last words had the solemnity, if not the dramatic quality of a confession.

"Think you it was but the matter of a gownd?"

The constable's glance travelled slowly over the landscape, from the house to the generous barn, and thence to field and meadow.

"I say it was not altogether but the matter of a gownd," he answered at last.

Copton turned to him with decision.

"And I say so, too," he agreed, with cautious impressiveness; "I know Mistress Salome; I have had much talk and many dealings with her, and I say when a man finds himself turning according to her will, it is not a matter of a gownd."

Again the two fell on silence, while the scents of the warm earth and the mown grass, and the twitter of birds drifted on the sunny air. It was not long before two other figures appeared at the hospitable door, and, after a moment's hesitation, stepped out and, turning towards them, strolled by Copton and his companion in the direction of a shaded path which divided the lawn from the meadows. Content's white embroidered muslin fell lightly about her, lending an added delicacy to her slender yet not fragile beauty; for the color in her cheeks was that of health, and her graceful carriage was as buoyant as when, with Archer, she climbed Salem hill, though subdued

tent greeted them with her pretty smile and low tones."

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to a more elegant deliberation. Stukely was dressed in the extreme of the fashion, and was, in appearance, no unfitting companion for the girl he walked beside. As they passed within a few steps of the two elderly men, Content greeted them with her pretty smile and low tones, while Stukely threw them a haughty glance by way of accompaniment.

"A fine afternoon, Degory," she said; "and you and Crackston have chosen a pleasant spot to spend it in."

The two men touched their caps, and looked after her approvingly, as her white draperies fluttered over the crisp, dry turf.

"That is a thing that one of my upbringing finds it hard to understand," said Stukely, almost impatiently; "that men like those — who, by the way, is he you call Degory? — the other I know to be a man vested in the most absolute authority," and his mouth drooped scornfully, "I have seen him more than once; but the other — "

"Is Degory Copton, a skilled carpenter and a man not to be despised; and I should think the sight of his cruel maiming might show thee that he has earned the kindness of all who love courage."

"I see the fellow hath lost his ears," said Stukely, carelessly.

"And because he loved the truth!" flashed Content, angered by his carelessness. "And you and I — we have not suffered for the truth — let us refrain from scornfulness for very shame." Her eyes were shining with indignant pity.

"I will love every clown in England that hath his just punishment, for that Mistress Content Cradock takes his part," he answered. Content shook off the flattery with a toss of her head.

"I love a man that is brave enough to love something better than himself!" she exclaimed.

"Ah, love them not all," he urged, "for thou art fated to find them ever at thy side."

It was not easy to answer glance or words with resentment; and, in the brief silence that followed, Content's wrath softened into tolerance. It was Stukely who resumed the subject.

"A carpenter and a constable," he said absently, "and they make two of a wedding party, and are greeted by Mistress Content Cradock as she passes by."

"And Master Cyprian Stukely thinketh that

we have no differences of birth or education in this our benighted colony," laughed Content; "well, it may be — and yet, methinks — but no, let us say there be no differences — give us yet time! We be yet too young a country, and the help given us in our colony-building yet too recent; the sturdy beams, brought by men like Crackston, and the sturdy blows struck by men like Copton, be yet too fresh in the memory of even our most worshipful and our most learned, to treat them as if they were of no service."

"Service? yes, I would have you remember that they be of service — which makes them not equals."

"Nay, truly," admitted Content, mischievously, "they be not the equals of them that be of no service; but — "

"I will not be angered," said Stukely, stiffly, "though Mistress Content strives ever to put me in the wrong."

"I would put no man in the wrong," she exclaimed, her wide open eyes gazing upon him with irritating innocence. "I would but maintain that when the final stone of our prosperity be laid, is time enough to knock away the supports and treat them as superfluous

— as I make no doubt you have learned to do in England. Only — I wonder — " she paused, and plucking a stalk of Timothy grass drew it slowly through her pink fingers.

" Well, and concerning what — does so well informed a maiden wonder? "

" I was wondering if the time might ever come when we would be compelled to call in these humbler builders to prop up again the tower of our magnificence," and she glanced at him sidewise.

" In short, thou wouldst remind me," he said, facing her, " that our England is in the hands of boors and clowns, and that it is idle to prate of the distinction of better breeding! Well, be it so. I will not even remind you that your own Governor Winthrop of blessed memory believed not altogether in throwing the reins of power to those who run beside the chariot of state. I will not even say that a change may yet be in England. I will talk no politics with you, Mistress Content Cradock — though you taunt me forever! It is a summer day, and the sun shines, and the smell of new-mown grass is on the air, and either that rustic fragrance or some essence rarer still has mounted to my brain like wine — and

— in short, I will not quarrel with thee, Mistress Content."

She looked up into his laughing eyes, whose mirth held something stronger and more earnest which made her glance away again before she broke into laughter too. Lightheartedness was in the air; if it sprang from the decorous joy of the wedding, or uttered itself from the myriad insect throats which were humming, buzzing, chirping through the indolent August afternoon, or breathed, as Stukely had suggested, from the mown and scented fields, she did not know or care. A vague unrest which had swept across the long summer days, and which had sometimes given place to a deeper depression, had vanished, and she was in a mood for laughter. As for Stukely, as he had said, the hour held for him a subtle intoxication. The Bay Colony had offered him few attractions hitherto. Kept there against his will, impotently raging against the news from England, sneering at the Puritan self-restraint and finding the Puritan frown bent upon what he considered most innocent pleasures, holding himself infinitely superior to these narrow colonists, yet kept by them at a civil distance, he chafed against

all the circumstances of his present existence. Since he had left Salem, and met Content, there had been a fillip of interest given to the possibilities of his life; but his opportunities for speaking with her had been few and restricted, — a limitation adding, for a man of his temperament, a special zest in its evasion. Hitherto, however, such evasion had been rendered specially difficult by her parents' disapproval and Content's own vague distrust. But to-day the rigid barriers of the environment seemed to have melted away. It was summer, and the day was long, and Content was smiling, and the ends of her white scarf floated softly across the slashed sleeve of his scarlet silver-laced coat, as they turned into a narrow footpath under a row of tall trees.

As they disappeared, Crackston and Copton looked after them pensively, and then at each other.

"I be more afeared of such folderols as goes there," remarked the constable, for once taking the conversational lead, "than of all the powers of the air — speaking of them with respect — that Mistress Salome do call to her aid, if so be she call them at all."

"He is but a light youth to bode much

heaviness; but, methinks, he is here for no good to the colony. And I trust," added Copton, grimly, "that Mistress Salome, or the powers of the air, or some other — whether it be the spiritual or the secular arm, I care not — will see to it that it be not so much for his own that he carry away Caleb Cradock's daughter."

"I venture that Caleb Cradock's own arm be long enough to circumvent such an one as he."

"That it be short enough is my care. He can reach well into the affairs of the colony — and I hope it be not clear over the heads of his own household."

"Caleb Cradock is a careful man."

"I have more trust in Mistress Cradock's measures."

"It may be. It seemeth to me sometimes," and Crackston paused to slowly straighten out one leg and then the other, "between you and me, that women have a sort of natural sense that they be born with, and that is not to be despised in such matters."

Copton's eyes expressed the faint and very distant reflection of a twinkle. "It hath so seemed to me, likewise," he admitted. "And

that they be born with it is well-nigh certain, for it be often so different from that of their natural protectors that they learned it not of them." For a minute or two these men, both wearing on in years, sat ruminating on the very interesting psychological questions suggested to persons of their experience by these observations.

"It was a handsome table that was set for the wedding guests," said Crackston at last, with what might have seemed irrelevance, but was not altogether, waving his arm towards the hospitable house; "and naught withheld from you and me."

"Yes," assented Copton; "but," and he moved nearer to his companion that he might speak more cautiously, "if it be intended to requite me for the little jobs I ha' done about the house of late, I would rather the worth of it had been given me in shillings and pence."

"A good dinner be a good dinner, man, and saveth lone men like us the price of it elsewhere."

"I could have eat less, and laid something by, had the payment been in coin of the realm."

The man's expression had changed from

that of philosophic calm; his glance had sharpened; and the wrinkles about his compressed lips had deepened. "He can well afford it," he added.

"Yes, truly, shillings be not so extra scarce about here; but there be that about a good dinner with little trifles thereto, that lone men think not of till they do see them, that is worth every bit an extra shilling to my mind," and the more susceptible Crackston smiled gently in well-flavored reminiscence. The other cast upon him a side-glance of contempt.

"So my hunger is satisfied, — a man must satisfy his hunger, an he can, — I lose not sight of things beyond," he said.

"An' thinkest thou that I do? Well, it may be I would let a guilty man escape with less girding at my own foolishness, this afternoon, than before I tasted yonder apple tarts," and Crackston drew long, lazy draughts of his pipe, with the relaxed air of one thoroughly sunk in sensuality and sloth. While Copton digested his contemptuous disapproval in silence, two men came out of the house, escorted by its master and taking a stately leave, each of whom was well calculated to strike remorse to the breast of so conscious an offender against

asceticism as was Crackston. One was Israel Glover, the scowl upon his brow unsmoothed even by the youthful joy he had been witness of; the other, an older man, grave and dignified, with a splendidly intellectual head, firm serious lips, a look of pride, concentration, and will, but all illuminated by the wisdom of a great man who, though proud, often severe, has learned benevolence. Every gesture, every glance, every detail of dress and carriage, betokened the revered minister of God, conscious of the greatness of his office, but recognizing all its duties. No contrast between men who held similar views and followed similar ends without tremendous disparity of intellect, could be more striking than that between these two as they turned from the house towards the gate opening upon the highway.

"And shame upon me for saying it!" exclaimed Crackston, with a sudden qualm, "in the very presence, as it were, of the Reverend Mr. Cotton!"

Copton followed the other's glance over his shoulder at the two clergymen as they walked away.

"I would not so much mind a temporary,

and, as it were, transient, fall from grace if it had been only Mr. Glover that was nigh," added the constable, meditatively; "and yet they be both ministers of God, though one of them not, as I have said, having the standing of a parish."

"Yonder apple tarts and vinegar, — they be both made out of the same thing," said Copton, dryly.

Upon a gray lichen-covered rock, beneath an elm, sat Content, with Stukely on the grass at her feet. They had not gone far; the grounds belonging to their host, one of the richest men of the colony, reached down to the stream which rippled some distance beyond. They were not out of sight of the windows of the house, and the highway, making a sudden curve, ran quite near them, so that they too saw Mr. Cotton and his companion pass on their way to the town. Content had grown suddenly silent. Her own attitude and that of Stukely recalled vividly that spring morning when she had sat on a hillside with Archer. At that time it had been the grudging season of spring; the rays of the sun had been grateful, and scarcely served to banish the chill; the green of the earth scant, and the birds and

growing things had not been over-bold, — save one little blossom which had perhaps known a longer life from its temerity. To-day, the green was luxuriant, the branches drooped heavily, save when they rustled with the gentle voice of a million leaves. The summer, the lavish summer, cast her treasure with a free hand upon the earth, and Content had moved out of reach of the too glaring sunlight. Stukely's lazy tones were musical; they had entirely lost the haughtiness that offended her; and occasional words had snatched an intensity that blended with the warm glow of Nature, and half affrighted, but did not wholly displease her.

"Why need the sun ever set?" he was saying, his eyes beneath their drooping lids wandering over the sunny meadows and the tilled fields; "surely he departs to find no fairer," — he paused, and concluded with a little laugh, "no fairer English colony to shine on. Does that suit thy patriotism, Mistress Content?" and he looked up into her face. "If I be somewhat awkward in my conclusion, it is that I be not over-used to ladies who reject an honest devotion, if it be not offered to their country rather than themselves."

"My country hath learned ere now to take what courtesy she can get," Content answered absently, "be it in the matter of sunshine or—" unconsciously her voice dropped, and she left her sentence unfinished. It was as if through Stukely's words she had caught the ring of Archer's sentences as they fell that spring day from his earnest lips. Had the earlier, more sparing season held, after all, a glow that the generous summer lacked? With a flash of tenderness she wished she might again hold in her hand the fragile paleness of the mayblossom.

"Or what, prithee?" asked Stukely. But before she replied, the voice of Dr. John Cotton, full, deliberate, melodious, drifted across from the highway, and they both turned to see the great man pass, neither he nor his companion glancing over the wall to where they sat.

"It seems almost a pity," said Stukely, lightly, as the clergymen passed out of ear-shot, "that having a man of such piety and eloquence as the Reverend Mr. Cotton present at a wedding, he was not asked to give his blessing to the union."

"Marriage is a contract," said Content,

sententiously; "it is a matter for the civil power."

"Thinkest thou so?" and Stukely turned to her and spoke more earnestly; "speak, sad brow and true maid! Thinkest thou that marriage is but a legal contract, and not a thing to be blessed by the Church? — even by a church with wings clipped and beauty marred," he added under his breath. Content's eyes grew troubled.

"It is not a sacrament," she asserted briefly.

"Not a sacrament!" Stukely saw his advantage and pushed it. "Ah, my New England maid! — you would cheapen the worth of human love! — and yet, methinks, even your spiritual guides give it a high place, though beneath the divine! Yet you would cast it out into the place belonging to moneys, and chattels, and contracts that may be bound by law but not consecrated! Fie upon you, for your scorn of what the most careless of us worldlings hold sacred!"

Content was disconcerted by this turning of the tables. Stukely, in all the dignity of conscious superiority, had risen and stood looking down upon her with a severity that she felt to be mocking, but which she could not meet.

She, whose Puritan instinct persistently sought the ideal beneath the actual, saw herself forced into defence of the material, by an accuser whose insincerity she suspected but could not prove.

"It may be," she said at last, animatedly, shifting from defence to attack, "that the contempt which those you speak of have shown for the spirit hath given our teachers an overlight consideration for the letter. The beauty of strength is, indeed, comely; but an I must have but one, give me the strength and let the beauty go!"

It had been a rare pleasure to see the fair idealist put to it to defend her position, — usually chapter and verse for her convictions were produced with such enviable readiness; but Stukely had too little real interest in the matter to continue the argument.

"And the strength of beauty," he murmured, still gazing down at her, "who can measure it?"

Content's eyes, raised in fearless earnestness, did not fall before his; but they went from his face, to the fleecy clouds of the horizon beyond, while the slight color deepened in the clearness of her cheeks. Something in her

face stirred in the man an emotion beyond admiration of her beauty, beyond the influence of the hour and the opportunity; for a moment his mood grew more serious, and his voice had a more earnest accent, as he concluded, "Yes, love, that the most careless of us hold sacred — since without it there is neither haven nor star."

The new quality of his tone struck Content's sensitive ear and startled her. The changes in this man's moods were as bewildering as they were sudden. She found no language to answer him, for the word love did not slip as easily from her lips as from his, in spite of her somewhat unusual freedom of speech.

"The guests are departing," she said finally, glancing back at the house. "I must take my leave, and thou, too," she added, with a mischievous smile, "unless thou wouldst wait thy dismissal, as at the hands of Mistress Salome."

"Truly that was a short shrift," he said; "but, believe me, it is another thing to take my leave when thou dost not stay behind."

Slowly they sauntered back, but Stukely's seriousness did not leave him. "It may be that it is as well that you ask not clergymen to say, what they cannot always mean, at a mar-

riage. They have over-much of that kind to say, as it is."

"The Reverend Mr. Cotton says never what he doth not mean," exclaimed Content, indignantly.

"Then he be the first of his cloth, I verily believe," observed Stukely, with bitter lightness.

"He with others came hither that they might say what they meant," retorted Content, with spirit.

"A privilege not extended to the stranger," he replied, dropping back to his usual graceful boldness, "since it be not permitted me to say all that with my soul I mean." It was with a glance towards the girl's father that Stukely concluded, for Caleb Cradock came across the lawn towards them, with no very cordial pleasure written upon his brow.

"I will relieve thee of the guardianship of my daughter," he said stiffly. "Content, thy mother seeks thee, go within — lest we be not later in leaving than is becoming."

With the smile that came so near to insolence upon his handsome mouth, Stukely bowed low.

"It becomes not an alien to struggle against the laws of the commonwealth," he said, with

an exaggeration of deference, "particularly that law of necessity that obtains otherwheres also. In obedience to that, I bid thy daughter farewell."

"My daughter grants thee thy discharge," said Cradock, with unsmiling grimness, as Content glided away into the house.

CHAPTER IX

"He could believe the promise of to-morrow,
And feel the wondrous meaning of to-day."

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth and Falsehood, for the good or evil side.
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt the darkness and the light."

TIMOTHY'S long Sunday was almost over; and after the emotional and intellectual demands of the day and its actual physical expenditure, Mistress Cradock herself was not sorry to sit peacefully on her garden bench and watch the sunset, with the child leaning against her knees.

"Where is Content?" said her husband's voice, as he laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"Within the house," she answered, making room for him beside her. "Where should she be at this hour?"

"I am not satisfied with Content," said Cradock, as he seated himself. He looked

weary; men of that day had many burdens to bear. "Not that we should ever be satisfied with our children, though they grow in grace under our eyes," he amended austerely; "but I like not her speaking with young Stukely so often — and, methinks, it is Salome who encourages her in a latitude of thought that I suspect, though it show itself not always in speech."

"She speaks not with young Stukely with any privacy or particularity."

"No, but — we are forgetting ourselves," exclaimed Caleb, sternly, "and before the child! Why, after the blessings of His grace vouchsafed us by the Lord this day, should my thoughts wander from His service to the carnal and the secular. Hath Timothy exercised himself in the catechism?"

"He hath learned it faithfully."

"That is well," and the tired man leaned back against the rough seat, while the golden ball sank slowly to the horizon.

The grass in the orchard was dry and tall, the yellowing plumes nodded in a cool breeze that was springing up; Timothy wandered away and left his parents alone; the moments filtered by, and, to a less strict interpretation, the Puritan Sabbath was over.

Though Caleb Cradock was not one of those who held latitudinarian views, evidently he felt that relaxation was permitted in the subject of discourse.

"I know of naught against young Stukely as a loyal citizen, though I may suspect something," he said, "save a certain attitude towards those who are — who have been — in authority on the other side of the water, which savoreth not of wisdom. And yet," he continued thoughtfully, "in these troublous times it is not for such loyal colonists, as, thank God, we are, to say just wherein the fault lies."

"Then wherein is he so blameworthy?" asked his wife.

"The fripperies of his attire, a manner that he hath of holding discourse, an indifference to the church, which peepeth out!" exclaimed Cradock. "These I may most unqualifiedly condemn, as unseemly, irreligious, yea, disloyal to the very spirit of our institutions! I like him not."

"His manner is not always unseemly, neither have I heard him flout the church," said Mistress Cradock, promptly; "an he do, believe me, Caleb, it is no daughter of

thine and mine that will let him go unreproved!"

What might have been a smile, had it been sufficiently indulged, flitted across the serious face of the esteemed Mr. Cradock.

"Thy daughter hath something of thine own readiness to find an answer," he observed.

"And if she be not silent under aspersion cast upon what she loves, by birth, training, and deep conviction — whose daughter is she, thine or mine, Caleb Cradock?"

Mistress Elizabeth's eyes were very bright as she turned them upon her husband, and they were met by a glance under which their brightness dimmed into something more tender, though no caress, no pressure of the hand, was exchanged between the Puritan husband and wife as they sat side by side in the orchard, upon which had fallen the curtain of twilight, while the unseen orchestra of tiny things chirped ceaselessly at their feet.

"Fear not for Content," said her mother at last. "Trust me, I will tell thee if there be danger." She had lowered her voice, for the girl had come out of the house, and was approaching; but before she reached them a sound at the gate made them all turn in the

direction. In the gathering darkness, Content alone immediately recognized Stukely; but in another moment he stood before them, greeting them with the courtesy that found Mistress Cradock disinclined to believe the very worst of him.

"I met this evening an acquaintance that hath but just come in the last ship from England," said the young man, "and he asked me had I knowledge of Mistress Content Cradock, as he was the bearer of an inclosure for her."

Content's eyes grew wider than ever in surprise, and even in the dim light the deeper flush on her cheeks was perceptible to one who watched. Possibly it was to note the effect of this surprise that Stukely had undertaken the delivery of the letter, for now he turned away to her mother, as he went on:

"He was about bearing it to the house of Richard Fairbanks; but I told him not only had I knowledge of the lady, but of her parents, — a knowledge I would were greater, — and that I should gladly increase by the slight service of bringing the letter to their door." As he spoke, he drew forth the missive in all that folded and sealed impressiveness that makes the envelope of to-day seem unworthy of

enclosing aught but flippancy, and gave it to Content.

"It would better have waited till the morn," said Cradock; "the Lord's Day is not one for the delivery of messages and parcels."

"But if I have read my Bible aright, — though far be it from my humility to venture an interpretation as opposing thine, — it was a day for the delivery of good news; and that I may hope this letter brings to Mistress Content."

Before his host could frame a rebuke that, while courteous, should lay bare his irreverence and not contradict his statement, Stukely bowed in farewell and was gone. As he closed the gate behind him, Content's ear caught the low lilt of a tune. He was humming the refrain of Salome's spinning song, —

"For Love came again,
With the rush of the rain,
On the breath of the wind."

An inclosure from England was too serious a thing not to receive the attention of the whole family, and Content did not dream of withholding its purport from her father and mother. As they all went into the house, her

heart fluttered with a variety of emotions. She did not need to be told in whose handwriting was the address of her letter, she felt sure it was Archer's; but her pleasure in this strengthening of an association that was still vividly present in her memory was not unmixed. Her father's attitude towards Stukely vexed her, and yet her own critical observation told her that it was not altogether unreasonable. The younger man had uttered flippant words that she could not forget, worse still, she suspected him of flippancy towards the things she held most sacred; yet this evening her own sense of partisanship had startled her, as he stood, graceful and careless, under her father's reproof, abundantly able as he was to defend himself without her aid, yet in every gesture and glance betraying his wish that she should not declare herself against him.

While her mother lighted a candle, Content cut the string and broke the seal of the letter. She was alone while she read it, for her father went out again to attend to some household matter, and her mother took Timothy to his trundle-bed. As she unfolded the stiff paper, it was with the impression of a new bond established between Archer and herself, — this

word coming from so far, from that old England across the waters, so dear, yet alien, to her personally, was like the assertion of a right.

To Mistress Content Cradock,
Of the Colony of the Bay,
Most Respectful Service and Greeting:

I have written my letters of duty and obligation to those who sent me hither, and now, Mistress Content, I venture to send a line to thee, since, save for those hurried ones mingled with counsels and instructions that accompanied me to the very instant of my setting forth, thy farewell was the last that sounded in my ears. And so, having for the moment done with the duties that those counsels concerned, I return first to that last leavetaking as the nearer to the present hour. And if this seem but a fantastic reason, then do I leave thee to find one for thyself, which thou hast not been chary of doing before now, for actions which might less easily bear a plain interpretation. The more specially do I venture, that thou and I having had certain speech concerning my dear Mr. Williams, I would tell thee how it hath gladdened my heart that I have met many who hold him in so great esteem. He is held in remembrance by the best, both as he appeared here when he made that most to be admired journey which obtained for us our charter, and as he was, before he left England, as a young man seeking greater liberty. To his letters am I beholden for consideration not a little, — a

consideration that hath obtained me ready audience of such men as Sir Henry Vane, one time Governor of the Bay, as thou knowest, — and one who did us such yeoman service, though he be a nobleman, in this same matter of our charter, and now member of the council, — and through this latter have I had sight of that great man who hath led the victorious army of the Parliament, and who some make bold to term usurper and hypocrite, and in whose rugged hands, others do say, lie the safety and the peace of England. Truly, they be parlous times, these in which England finds herself! And yesterday, when, with Sir Henry Vane and one or two others, strangers like myself, under his guidance, I stood in the room where that great general sat, I found my heart in my mouth to think that I was looking upon the man who had eyes to foresee and an arm to strike, while others wondered and withheld. Methinks, Mistress Content, that thou, whose glance I have seen flash and thy cheek kindle at the sound of great words and the knowledge of great deeds, would have felt thy breath come and go more quickly at the sight of that man! It be certain that there be something in his presence, and in the eyes that look out of a face that is of no mild and serene comeliness, that exhorts, "Tremble not for England, I am here!" — and yet not as a proud man that biddeth stand off and see that he be sufficient, but rather as one that hath seen and known that in the direst and worst there is a

God in the whirlwind who thinketh upon His people and guideth their leaders into safety! Dost thou think I am over zealous in praise of this Oliver Cromwell, and that the sight of him hath somewhat disconcerted my judgment? I care not, — for I tell thee, Mistress Content, there is that in him that would take thy reason, also, in its grasp, and change it into a confidence that would shrink not at what men call the stain of blood upon his garments, since it is that of a sacrifice that was offered in wrestlings of spirit to the God of Israel!

Content laid down the letter, the stir of Archer's enthusiasm had reached her across the leagues of sea. It was this regulated but intense love of nobility and truth that had first led her to acknowledge his attraction. It was too truly the keynote of her own nature to leave her unmoved when struck by another's emotion. Suddenly Stukely's mocking brilliancy seemed as exaggerated and as transient as it had the day that she and Archer met him in Salem. The figure of Oliver Cromwell loomed majestic in her imagination and lent some of its greatness to him who so readily recognized it.

I heard little that he said, [the letter went on] but a word or two that he spoke to me will ever have

an importance in my mind from the voice in which they were uttered. To Sir Henry Vane he spoke of "Naseby mercy," with the thankfulness of a man who knows where thankfulness is due. And when Sir Henry would have me forward, he spake most kindly of the "sweet symptoms" of the grace that hath been shown our colonies. It appeareth that they have been oft in his Excellency's mind. I would thou couldst see the man. Present my respectful greeting to thy father, and tell him this: that though there be enemies to our welfare and they be busy, — of which I have written otherwheres more at length, — still he whose will shall presently make the will of England his, is towards us and our welfare. "Timeously hath He shown me mercy," said to me the great man, — and his voice was that of one who sought to see the travail of his soul that he might be satisfied, — "truly what power He may give me, I would not fail towards His servants."

And there is an end of my greatness, Mistress Content. In faith the mantle of his Excellency touched me but in passing, but thy courtesy will not begrudge me the reading of the tale. Prithee, may I not tell it thee again by word of mouth, when they have found no more for me to do on this side? I have discovered no mayblossom here, and the one I brought with me must needs do for all my promise of a New England spring. I commend me

to thy parents' remembrance in respectful salutation, and I would Timothy could see the brave shows of London streets.

Thy most obedient,

RESOLVED ARCHER.

Her father and mother had returned when Content finished her letter, and she gave it to the former that he might read it aloud. It was with a triumphant thrill of sympathy that she heard Cradock's voice quiver through the words concerning Cromwell. The stern piety of the Ironsides was no strange and alien distortion to the New England Puritan who felt the same stalwart conviction strengthen his soul, and read it, as now, flashed back from the steady eyes of a child who knew and loved her inheritance.

Meanwhile, Stukely no longer hummed the refrain of Salome's song. Instead, in sullen silence, he walked along the shadowy highway. The sovereign moon of August was rising; but the tall trees cut off huge patches from its radiance, and flung a deeper hint of mystery and loneliness across the brilliancy of its lavish flood. He had offered to take the letter half in bravado, half in curiosity; for he knew who had intrusted it to the hands of the ship's pas-

senger. He had never forgotten who had been Content's companion when he had seen her in Salem Street, and Content knew that he had not forgotten. Seeming trifles had led him to attach importance to the incident of that companionship, — a word dropped now and then by Salome, if with intention or not, he could not tell; the estimation in which Archer was held, his association with Roger Williams, and the well-known friendship existing between Williams and Caleb Cradock: all these things had led him to consider Archer's relations with Content with some attention. He had wished to see her eyes when he should give her the letter; he had seen them, and though no overmastering emotion had driven from them the look of interest that she had learned to accord him, still, what had been an affectation, a passing irritation, lightly encouraged and lightly dismissed, had suddenly sprung into actual, indescribably vexing existence. He was jealous of Resolved Archer, so jealous that he would gladly have swept him out of his path, as angrily as he swept aside the long stalk of a weed that fell over upon the road and almost tripped him in his swift, careless stride.

"'T is the cursed assumption of the fellow with his cursed Roundhead name!" he said in a savage whisper. "What right has he to send her a letter that she takes in the very presence of her parents without a tremor of timidity? The Puritan sensitiveness of Mistress Content doth not shrink from the handwriting of a lover! May the affairs of thy blessed colony keep thee safe among the other churls!" he exclaimed aloud a moment later. "And I am here — and a year and a day is a long time, Master Archer, even for a man of thy wisdom and thy inches! And Cyprian Stukely is here, — though the fair Puritan doth not look with exceeding approval upon his frivolity, — howbeit if she exercise her saintliness to reclaim him and send him back to England to join the rest of the canting rout! — " He paused suddenly in his rapid passage along the road of checkered light and shade.

"I love her!" he exclaimed under his breath. "An an oath would help the folly of it, it should have it!" he murmured mockingly, after a moment, as he went slowly on. "I know of those who would laugh could they hear Cyprian Stukely rail upon fate because he hath fallen in love with a Puritan maiden who

hath a lover with all the language of the courts of the tabernacle at his tongue's end! Methinks I can catch the echo of the merriment of Barbara Savage — it would keep her in jests for a summer day. Well, I was ever a good railer, but, if I mistake not, it helped never over-much. There are no words to undo this coil. I have played with the steel of the most decorous and distant dalliance ever vouchsafed me; and because it was cold and did not burn my fingers, I forgot that it could cut. I love her!" he exclaimed again, more softly than before.

He was now upon the border of the busiest part of the town, Cradock's dwelling being a short distance without its limits, the last of a line of scattered farmhouses with their trees and meadows about them. Turning down a somewhat precipitate street, he made his way along the rough and narrow pavement to the dock. With the change from the silent country road to the confined streets, upon which, although it was evening, there was still a hum of voices and the coming and going of occasional foot-passengers, the current of his thoughts changed also, taking a still more vexing turn. As he came out upon the dock,

he paused in the shadow of a warehouse looking out upon the gleaming path of smooth, oily water that stretched out into the night. The spot seemed quite deserted; but as he waited, the sound of a slow, light step drew nearer, and the figure of a man cut off for an instant the moonlit path as he passed between Stukely and the water. Cyprian waited still, till the stranger turned, and then went forward.

"You are somewhat late," said the other, by way of greeting; "I have not found overmuch to interest me in this neighborhood while you tarried."

"I was hindered," replied Stukely, briefly.

"Ah! And has thy haughtiness come to a decision?"

The man spoke with a sarcastic intonation more disagreeable than Stukely's own.

"As well that as anything else, I suppose. It is hardly a gentleman's work to play the spy; but I owe these colonists little but short words and cold looks."

"Nay, nay; you go too far," said the stranger, more smoothly. "It is no playing the spy. It is but letting the government — or what of right should be the government —"

"You grow confused with your figures of speech," interrupted Stukely, bitterly.

"And what shall be the government again," went on the other, calmly, "know things it does well to know for its own best welfare, and which every loyal subject should wish it to know — and for the real welfare, also, of those its subjects who grow somewhat overbold on the strength of the salt water between them and their liege lord. And if certain information that you can readily give us leads to complications which may perplex and harass still further those usurping powers, — which have already found the knot of administration a hard one for their clumsy fingers, and which it is the part of all loyal hearts to so perplex and harass, — what is it but a patriot's part?"

"There is no need of sugaring thy bolus!" exclaimed Stukely, impatiently. "If I take it, it is for my own good. And yet not altogether!" he broke out passionately. "Heaven knows — or hell — if there be wisdom in either — that I hate yonder canting crew, and would fain have a hand in overthrowing their hypocritical practices! As for these people here —" he paused, for with swift vividness he beheld a vision of Content's enkindled eyes,

and the proud lift of her head, as she had said, "I love a man that is brave enough to love something better than himself!"

"Well, these people here?" questioned the other. "These meek and humble seekers for liberty who love not even a church that bears not the mark of their invention — what of them?"

"They have men of prudence among them; let them look to it that they be not embroiled too easily," concluded Stukely, with a scornful laugh; "as for me, I am too flippant a gallant to be intrusted with their counsels; but a private gentleman may make a note of what he sees amiss."

"Precisely, you speak by the card; I thought my judgment of men led me not astray when I remembered that the noble and accomplished Cyprian Stukely was sojourning here, and, I guessed, somewhat unwillingly."

"What wouldst have me do?" asked Stukely, accepting the satiric tone of his companion. Either he knew him too well to be angered by what was evidently the humor of the man, or they were so alike in their way of looking at things that he resented his fleers as little as if they had been of his own uttering.

For nearly an hour the two men paced the rough timbers of the deserted wharf, talking earnestly. When they separated, it was with a most brief and unemotional leavetaking.

"When dost return?" asked Stukely, as the other turned to ascend the narrow street.

"In the first ship that sails. I find English air more grateful, even though breathed by so pestilential a rout as the present Parliament, than that of this niggard colony."

"Take care that thy breathing space be not circumscribed by some of that same rout!" said Stukely, as the other turned on his heel.

By some contradictory process of thought, he did not enjoy sneers at the colonists from another, as much as if they were his own, or as much as he would have done a month earlier. The older man answered only by a wave of the hand, as he disappeared in the shadow of the buildings; and, a moment or two later, Stukely saw him cross a broad band of moonlight further up the steep road. Cyprian sauntered back again to the edge of the dock, and stood, deep in thought, gazing over the heaving water and hearing, without heeding, its sucking and gurgling restlessness about the sturdy piles. It was to this that his fickle

dissatisfaction, his indifference to God and man alike, had brought him! A voyage undertaken, half in capricious curiosity, half as a convenient escape from the annoying and possibly perilous consequences of his own folly, had resulted in a deliberate engagement to receive money for playing the spy for the benefit of certain malcontents. It did not seem to him a great wrong; but, after all, it bore an aspect of treachery; and yet he recognized no bond and no loyalty that held him to the opposite course. The smooth water slipped and slid under the rays of the moon; there was no true, shining path, immutable and unmistakable! One must find a way wherever the illumination of fate fell, let the purposes and creeds of life fluctuate and shift under it as they might! Disgusted with the conduct of affairs in England, where what might have been a career was thwarted by his own course and that of events, seeing nothing in the restrictions and conscientiousness of the colonists but a foolish and paltry narrowness, he had been in a ready mood to find any easy employment not too compromising to his daintiness. A vague, pearly mist floated in from the water. It caressed his cheek, cool

and light, like the touch of Content's embroidered Indian scarf as it had blown across his face as they walked together. Content Cradock! It was as if he felt her slight, yet strong presence stealing towards him over the moonlit ripple to lay a restraining hand upon his arm. He might take a euphemistic view of his own position; but no glamour concealed from him the truth that it put her further away from him than ever. Yet with the want of logic of a wilful passion, he never dreamed of resigning her. Twice he paced back and forth across the dock, and then paused again, while the moon swept away a fragment of veil from before her face. For an instant the sordid temptation seemed to shrivel in the pure flame of Content's enthusiasm. But the instant passed; there must be some way out, even in this land of iron barriers! What were barriers for but to be torn down? Heavens! What were all these names and creeds and sins and disloyalties? He was growing cramped and stiffened and blinded like the rest of these fanatics; but let him not forget that there had been an England once where one might love and be merry, and, even with a court somewhat given over to pious observances, shout

for a king who could draw a sword without saying a prayer over it! He stretched his arms over his head, and let them fall in a gesture of self-scorn, — he had come so near finding fault with the gift the gods flung into his lap!

"I will go and see Mistress Salome," he said to himself at last. "It is odds if she have not some sympathy with me after all that has been and gone. And they do say," he added with a shrug of his shoulders, "that she can brew a love philter an' she will; and that it be no worse folly than many another, she knows as well as I."

The nine o'clock bell had clashed forth, and it was a long walk to the sandy stretch of land upon which Salome dwelt, but Stukely had learned that she burned her candle late, or else sat in the moonlight or the starlight looking out upon the waters that lay before her door. As he looked back upon the town, the huge arms of a wind-mill lifted themselves above the roofs of the houses in what seemed to him uncouth menace and grim warning. He covered the distance from the dock to the path leading to Salome's in a comparatively short time. As he turned into this by-way, he

observed that another man was moving before him towards the house, and as he drew near it, in the full flood of the moonlight falling upon the unshaded sands, his figure and gait were more or less familiar to Stukely, who, nevertheless, failed to place him. As Cyprian watched him with some curiosity, he stopped, and with startling suddenness turned his back upon the house and came swiftly along the path towards the later comer. Face to face, the two men paused in the narrow way, and, to his surprise, Stukely recognized the Reverend Israel Glover. The countenance of the clergyman was set in hard lines and bore the unmistakable marks of mental agitation.

"You, too!" he exclaimed sternly, as after a few seconds of hesitation, his deep-set eyes burning with excitement, he became aware who the young man was. "You, too! Has the Babylonish woman laid upon you also the fetter of her chains!" Then, as if he had spoken with unconscious frankness, he added, "This is a lonely road and a late hour for two wayfarers to find one another. Turn back with me that we come again into the strait and narrow way."

Something in the tragic earnestness of the

man led Stukely to obey what was almost a command. It had been a whim born of idleness, and a wish to escape his own thoughts, that had led him thither, and now another whim turned him back with this unfamiliar companion.

"Thou dost something overrate Mistress Salome's power, methinks," he said lightly, as he paced at Glover's side. "Not that she hath not power that somewhat passeth my idle comprehension," and he glanced back at the lonely little house, crouching dark and still upon the sand, with a shiver begotten of the streak of superstition running through his thoughtless scepticism. "But a man so versed in ban and exorcism as the Reverend Mr. Glover —"

"Beware touching on what thou hadst best leave unsaid!" exclaimed the other. Then, as if his Puritan self-restraint could not hinder the stormy progress of some emotion, he broke out, "I tell thee I went there dreaming that it was for her salvation! But my error has driven its iron into my soul. I was deceived by my own carnal folly! My silver has become dross, and my wine mixed with water!"

Cyprian looked at him in amazement; al-

though he had seen him but two or three times, he was sure that this was not the man his acquaintances knew.

"Verily, this hath become a land of deserts and pits and of the shadow of death," went on Glover, as it seemed to his companion, incoherently; indeed he was but half conscious that he was not alone. "Though I wash me with nitre, though I take much sope, yet is my iniquity marked before the Lord God!" At last he fell utterly silent; and the strangely-assorted couple walked back into the town, where they parted with no further word than a brief one of farewell from Stukely's lips.

"Are we all mad together?" said the latter to himself as he entered his house. "Surely, it is not in entire sanity that the Reverend Israel Glover chooseth for strange confidences the alien royalist and unbeliever, Cyprian Stukely!"

CHAPTER X

"Not the first violet on a woodland lea
Seemed a more visible gift of Spring than she."

"Life sings not now but prophesies."

"WELL met, Mistress Salome!" called out Stukely, gayly. Salome acknowledged the greeting with a glance that would have been a smile from another woman.

"Well met, indeed," she said gravely, "if Mr. Stukely's heart be as light as his air, since it is ever well to view happiness."

"Thy lips are still those of an oracle," answered Stukely, evasively, not allowing himself to be discouraged by her perception of the vexed anxiety that underlay his carelessness. "Dost thou never put aside the burden of thy powers? Methinks on such a spring morning as this, when the very spirit of gayety is in even the Puritanic atmosphere of the Bay, thou mightst close thy senses to all else. Is it not, verily, a pity," he went on jestingly, as he leaned his broad shoulders against a giant tree,

"that your lawgivers cannot take out of this spring air just that melting quality that sets free the hopes of men, that quintessence of joyousness, that most insinuating softness? Ah, Mistress Salome! what are your stern counsellors about that they compound not with the year that it set not loose on us this season of spring?"

Salome drew a long breath of the scented air, as she looked about her. They stood in the wood, not far from her house, through which Roger Williams had followed his Indian guide, now more than a year ago. The sunlight lay in warm patches upon the earth, carpeted with leaves of dull and of glossy green, or danced in vivid flecks upon the gray trunks of trees, while the velvet moss crouched, cool and soft, about their roots. Her eyes came back and fell upon the young man in his beauty, his assurance, and apparent lightheartedness. Not for all the openly expressed disapproval of the colony had he laid aside a single frippery of his costume. He wore doublet and hose, and there was a soft, bright sheen in the silk facings and the slashed sleeves, while frills of lace, that stumbling-block of this ascetic community, ruffled undauntedly down the

front of his embroidered waistcoat. Salome's queenly figure, clad in the entire simplicity of a plain taminy gown, straightened itself, as she surveyed him, seeming, as he did, to represent another and a more glad civilization.

"Before they bind the sweet influences of the spring-tide," she answered slowly, "they must seek to control less insidious and more wilful attacks upon their welfare."

"How much does she know, and whence?" asked Stukely of himself, as they stood facing each other with a glance which suggested mutual understanding, but guarded hostility.

"Where is the young man Archer?" he asked aloud. Almost against his will he had expressed the annoyance that was uppermost in his thoughts.

"In England, seeking to allay certain suspicions, and set right certain misunderstandings, that threaten to disturb the peace of our relations. They be set afoot by some busybodies, none know precisely who or how."

"Mistress Salome hath so accurate and detailed information concerning things at a distance, that it were difficult to find grounds for contradiction should one choose so thankless a task."

"So long as she hath knowledge wherewith to answer thee, she may let the contradiction go till it too call for an answer," she replied indifferently.

"And when doth Mr. Archer return?"

"When others go."

"When others go? And who may these others be?" His scoffing tone did not quite conceal his anxiety.

"Those who would take the place he now holds," said Salome, still carelessly. Stukely scanned her closely. What did this answer mean? Would it bear no other construction than the evident one that others were to be sent to do Archer's present duty in England, or had it an oblique reference to the man who was striving to supplant him here? Did this woman know something of his own future that he could only guess, something that would send him away from the colony, leaving Archer free to push his own cause where he most wished him defeat? He ground his teeth in anger at the thought of such a conclusion. What did she know? Had she supernatural knowledge, or was she playing with his credulity?

"I should think Mr. Roger Williams would

fain recall him, since he so values his companionship," he said. "There seems to be more turbulence even than is common, among his brother Anabaptists. This man Coddington is not altogether at one with the pious founder of Providence Colony and his adherents."

"Providence Colony was not founded with a cordial expectation of its members being ever at one," said Salome, smiling slightly.

"No, truly, — but there are threatenings that may somewhat involve the Bay. I hear talk of a certain Clarke, who proposeth to come hither to administer consolation to such of the saints as be cruelly cut off from spiritual advantages, and somewhat straitened in the matter of baptizing themselves, when they so feel inclined."

"And he come on no worse errand, methinks even the tender conscience of Mr. Governor may let it pass."

"Mr. Governor is no longer his Excellency John Winthrop." Stukely spoke idly, and hardly heeded Salome's reply. He cared very little, as was natural, about what seemed to him the mere quibbles of religious controversy. He was indescribably vexed and harassed, however, by other matters. What had already

been something of a breach between him and Content's family, had widened rather than closed; and the winter had gone without affording him more than the most unfruitful glimpses of the girl. But these difficulties, and the vexing annoyances of his position, which increased tenfold any pleasure, served only to make his passion for her a dangerously absorbing one. The circumstances had increased also his jealousy of Archer. He knew that he was esteemed in the quarter where he himself was most disapproved. He had not failed to note the stalwart beauty of the young Puritan; he had even caught the hint of dominance in his expression, veiled by a wondering gentleness, called forth, as he could now easily see, by the wilfulness, as well as the sweetness of Content's charm. And Stukely knew enough about women to be fully alive to the danger of such an attitude. Moreover, he had recognized, in the austere glance which had been vouchsafed him, a pride equal to his own, though destitute of its sneer. His jealousy and his chagrin had reached their acme this lovely spring morning when the very breeze was a caress, and the longing for Content's

presence made love chafe impotently against the barriers of discretion. While he stood leaning against the tree, moodily reviewing his grievances, which Salome had said so little to dispel, she was searching among the growing things, and plucking here and there a leaf, or pulling up a tiny root. It was very quiet, and the forest asserted the spell that seems ever within its glades, — that hint of the presence of creatures not human, but gifted with human attributes, that makes it easy to catch the waft of a dryad's garments, or fancy a distant rustle the soft footfall of a faun. Little circles, which might be magic rings, revealed themselves on the moss; the pale green tufts of the ferns nodded in gentle assent to the propositions of the fleeting wind, save when fitful zephyrs, coming in cross currents, made them flutter in sudden, swift remonstrance. Here and there, vistas apparently opened widely, which closed again later on into mysterious misleadings. Strange influences seemed at work while Salome sought for the simples with whose properties she was wisely conversant.

"Hast a love charm among thy marvellous draughts of healing?" asked Stukely, abruptly.

"Call you that a draught of healing?" asked Salome, calmly, as she stood upright, having apparently found the special object of her search.

"Nay, verily," he answered shortly.

"Thou wouldst ask me then, have I a brew that will turn the head and not make light the heart? — a wine that will prove truly a mocker?"

"I would ask for something, for once, in these colonies that hath not Scripture warrant," exclaimed Stukely, impatiently, "I would fain turn to me the heart of a maiden, whether by fair means or foul; but, I promise thee, I would not make it heavier, if love may stand in the way of grief."

The idle whim of a summer night, forgotten after its immediate execution had been thwarted by his meeting with Glover, had returned to him. Salome came slowly toward him, and seated herself on a gray boulder, marked with patches of blue-green lichens.

"And thou dost believe I could give thee such a draught, an I would?" she said thoughtfully.

Cyprian laughed a little uneasily. "I know that Mistress Salome has strange powers. I

have seen that the hearts of men may lie in her hand — even in this rigid air have I seen a man in most pitiful case —"

"Leave better men than thyself to their own counsels! Let us consider the case of Master Cyprian Stukely."

With a shrug Cyprian went on, —

"And why not the heart of a damsel which should see in love no demon of unholy aspect, but rather the smile of a winning stranger." His voice softened with his last words, as if the thought of Content touched him like her actual presence.

"And thou wouldst win her by such means, rather than by the spells that thy youth should consider more potent? — thy gallant bearing, the voice and the eyes that before now, methinks, have wiled a maiden's heart into dwelling over much on their perfections."

The pensive irony of her tone irritated him.

"I care not for thy flouts! I would win Content Cradock; an thou wilt help me, thou mayst mock the length of a summer's day! Thou hast power, of what sort I know not and care not; an it be strong enough to sway yonder maiden's heart, I would call it to my assistance."

Salome drew the stalk of a slender plant caressingly through her fingers, as she looked down at it.

"On what ground of mutual aim and obligation does Master Cyprian Stukely claim the assistance of Salome?"

"The claim of a mutual knowledge of love — of its bitterness and its sweet," he answered recklessly.

She did not pause in her trifling occupation, the slender green stalk passed and repassed through her nervous, strong, brown fingers.

"A good ground, truly," she said softly, "for thee and me to meet upon. And thou dost well to remind me of it. But times have changed," she said, a moment later, looking up at him with a flash that banished the weariness that hung usually about the lids of her splendid eyes. "These are other days than those when a young man of graceful presence, with a trick of murmuring in a woman's ear words that bear a meaning beyond their purpose, and with naught upon his hands but idle intrigues that worked neither for good nor ill, could win a heart without other enchantments, and feared no rival pres-

ent or beyond seas. The psalm-singing Puritan has ousted the gay cavalier from the high places that he coveted — can it be that he can teach him, too, the petty lore of love?"

"I know the lash of thy tongue," exclaimed Stukely, angrily; "I would not have had it hiss about a request I proffered thee, save that I have little time. My days here may be fewer than even I think. Content's father blocks my path, and his daughter is more dutiful than some of her spirit, and I am in desperate case. But I have what assurance of thy good-will I am like to get. And now, farewell."

"It is beyond my feebleness to lengthen hours into days, and days into months," said Salome; "and it is time thou wouldst have, thou must make thine own calendar."

Her words fell ominously on Cyprian's ears, as he strode away. He felt indeed that his own actions made the days at his disposal less in number, for though he had heard no whisper that threatened a hurried departure, he felt that it might begin and wax into an outcry at any time. After all they were voluntary steps that led him away from Content, and the knowledge of this only deepened his irrita-

tion. Salome sat where he had left her, the flecks of sunshine falling upon the dark red hair, which was uncovered this warm spring day, and upon the sombre hue of her severely plain dress.

"The same nature," she murmured, "and again love might be a help, and again it bids fair to be but hindrance! It were well for Resolved Archer to find his way back again, an public weal be not more to him than private."

Her quick ear caught the sound of a light footfall, and she looked up to see Content coming towards her, the fair head bent over an open letter that she carried in her hand. As she drew near, the ferns brushing her garments, the sunbeams caressing her figure, the fresh leaves of a young beech touching her shoulder, she looked the spirit of Spring; but when she raised her eyes, and saw Salome, they wore a look that spoke of something beside Spring's dear promise and anticipation, — a look that was not there when she strolled up the hill near Salem with Resolved Archer. Two years, less crowded with personal experiences than in a more complex civilization, but filled with the thought and the observation that make

character, had developed Content's charming and spirited girlishness into something more positive, more conscious. The charm, the spirit, and the girlishness were there still; but there was added a quality of concentration and purpose. With a smile of greeting, she approached Salome and stood a moment, one hand resting on the lichen-splashed boulder.

"I have had a letter, Mistress Salome," she said.

"Thou hast had a letter before now, and from the same writer."

"Yes; but not quite such an one as this."

"Nay, since now he tells thee of his speedy return."

"Speedy as such things are — yes," and the girl looked down at the letter. "One comes across not too quickly at the best. Two letters in two years, and a message or two under another's cover, — that is not too often, Mistress Salome."

"But often enough in troublous times, by uncertain despatch, and when there be much reading to be had between the lines."

"I tell you of the letter that I may ask your counsel," said Content, suddenly, after a

moment's silence. "My mother hath seen the letter too; but there be certain things therein, and —" she hesitated.

"And certain things without," said Salome, quietly.

"Yes, then, — certain things without, to which, by my father's bidding, she will not listen. And yet — for I would first of all be just! — I would fain have them listened to," concluded Content, with a smile, half amusement, half wistfulness.

"And thou didst say to thyself, Salome will hear — she has heard much in her time."

"Yes, I said to myself, Salome will hear. So, listen."

It was only detached sentences that Content read from Archer's letter.

"'I write not to thee of public matters —'" she began.

"I was saying anon it was time he left them for his private weal," interpolated Salome.

Content glanced up, questioning, and then let her eyes fall to the page again; and her clear voice went on, "'Thou knowest enough of the war and desolation here; and that the great General Cromwell groweth ever in power and influence, all other powers and influences seem-

ing on the wane beside him. But that I may see thee again shortly, — this it is that I would write of to thee, — since it be a matter — ' "

Content hesitated an instant, before she read. " ' But this homeward journey of mine cannot well be until another come in my place, and one of more responsibility in our colony, whose very presence will be an off-set to that of this Mr. Coddington who worketh ill to us, seeking altogether his own, under cover of our welfare. And though he can be but ill-spared at home, I think it must be Mr. Williams himself that should come — ' "

" He cannot altogether leave public matters alone, this young embassador, even in so confessedly private a business as this letter."

" Would you have him treat me as though things of moment were too high for me? " demanded Content, with vivacity.

" Nay, nay, it is not my letter," answered Salome, imperturbably.

" Well, then, thou wouldst like it better an he wrote of a new fashion in mantle and silken hoods! "

" I would like it an thou go on concerning these public matters; it be excellent discourse and demandeth not skipping."

With a smile which she hastened to convert into a frown of absorption, Content continued:

"'That there be others at work here, both against our smaller colony and thy strong and opulent commonwealth, there be no doubt. Reports are rife of insubordination, of disloyalty, of a spirit of rebellion within all the colonies; and when I and other friends of our new country seek for the fire that sendeth forth so blinding a smoke, it be so small a spark that it be scarce worth the stamping out. But no sooner is it quenched, than it springeth up in another place, so that there be a dull sort of irritation throughout the Parliament, and among others, against us; though, fortunately, of late, perplexities and dangers at home do so heavily press upon those in authority here, that they have but little time for any other country; but yet neither is this altogether to our advantage, for they have no time to listen to any defence, and glean but a certain hostility from the seeds planted by these unseen enemies.'"

"Master Archer hath a pretty turn for argument," said Salome, gravely, "and doth not want for similes. I be somewhat in doubt

if it be a flame that is lighted or a seed that is planted by these powers of darkness."

"There be little doubt that he is on the watch against any devices whatever, and hath much ado to be even with them," said Content, with a suggestion of defiant partisanship.

Salome nodded.

"And it becomes us to be grateful," she said with a faint smile. "Go on, my maid."

"There is little more," observed Content, somewhat out of temper. It was one thing to let fly a shaft of raillery herself, quite another to have Salome pick flaws in Archer's seriousness. "He saith he trusts not Mr. Coddington's zeal for our welfare," she concluded shortly; but her resentment was short-lived.

"Is it not the work of the arch enemy," she burst out, as she glanced over the remaining pages, "to thus seek to poison the sources of our peace and prosperity at the very fount?" Her arm fell to her side, the sheet clenched in her hand. "Is it not enough to have left England and its softness and its wealth for the rigors of a country hardly so dear to our fathers as to their children; to have been hungry

and to have been cold; to have faced the dangers of a wintry sea, and to have buried many of their dearest?" — the girl choked with emotion. Salome listened to her silently, though her eyes smouldered with an answering fire. "To have done these things, and to have come at last to peace and to pleasantness — only to know that the enemy is still at work, that he would snatch from us the fruits of our toil, and that the same threats are uttered by the lips of other men!"

"Truly it be not a noble task —"

"A noble task! It is the task of a traitor and a coward!" With the pitiless justice of youth, the words fell, keen and swift, upon the soft air; but they were music in Salome's ear. The flash of Content's eyes, the scorn of her lips, the finality of her emphasis, gave the other woman an acute pleasure which she did not betray, save by a look which Content, absorbed in her own burning indignation, did not observe.

"And for what wouldst thou seek counsel — a maid that knows her own mind so well?" asked Salome, after a moment. "Surely thou dost not think to regulate the affairs of the English Parliament through even so learned an intermediary as Resolved Archer?"

The girl did not answer. She found it difficult to formulate, even to herself, the impulse which had led her to Salome. A troubled look succeeded that of conviction.

"Thou art perchance thinking," went on Salome, watching her, "that if young Mr. Archer come, perhaps it were better young Mr. Stukely should go." Content's cheek flushed crimson. "And thou art thinking that young Mr. Stukely may not go with too good a grace, and that if the task fall upon thee to send him, it is not altogether a light one." A robin sang loud and clear in the tree above their heads, and its note of joy was, in Content's ears, irritatingly positive and self-assured. "And thou art wondering if when young Mr. Stukely has gone, it will be with altogether a light heart that thou rememberest a certain trick that he hath of catching all his happiness from the look of the eyes, and the sound of the voice of one Mistress Content Cradock." Still the listener found no reply to the gentle, half-earnest, half-mocking words. Her head drooped, and her eyes fell to the tiny red cups of the moss at her feet, and studied their inconsequent vividness with sudden attention.

"And thou art wondering if it be not un-

maidenly and most unwarrantable, and entirely without just cause, that thou makest the matter the subject of any consideration whatever." Content's lips broke into a smile which did not quite drive away the gravity of her eyes, as she raised them to her companion's.

"I was sure thou wouldst know my thoughts better than I myself," she said. "When didst thou fail?"

"And how of Resolved Archer himself? Was he not named without due warrant and consideration? May he not be light and volatile, and lacking true earnestness of purpose? May he not be self-seeking, insincere —" Content threw back her head proudly.

"I know —" she began.

"Ah, child, thou *knowest!*" exclaimed Salome, with the first hint of impatience she had shown that day. "Listen, I owe thee a story, and I would tell it to thee. For," she added in her low, vibrating voice, "it is as if thou wert my own youth come back again to ask it of me."

Content's heart beat quickly, she had wondered often concerning Salome's past, as had many others; but none asked her questions, and

if there were a few who knew, their counsel was well kept.

"Let us walk further," Salome went on; "I would speak without interruption."

Together they went along the rough path which was scarcely even that, and before long the wood changed its character and became a bit of pine forest. It was but a small area of hemlock and fir; but no other tree grew within it, and the air was spicy with a resinous odor, mingling with the salt of the sea, while the ground was no longer a tangle of vines, roots, and moss, but a slippery, tawny carpet of pine-needles. Salome seated herself on a fallen tree, and Content sank down beside her. There was no trace of emotion on the face of the older woman, no suggestion of having yielded to an impulse, or come to a sudden resolution; apparently she had determined to break the long silence as deliberately as she had uttered many another word that would have been startling on other lips, and committed many a calm audacity. To Content, it seemed that she was being made the object of an experiment, rather than that Salome was seeking the relief of confidence; and yet, with the dramatic fitness that was seldom absent from Salome's slightest

acts, she had chosen the place of all others for a confidence. Beneath these trees it was twilight ever, not the checkered shade of the earlier wood with its flecking patches of mild sunshine quickening the duller green into golden hues, but a subdued illumination, and here and there a mellow reflection like that through the palely tinted window of a cathedral.

Close at hand rose slender, straight, tall stems, further off, slender, straight, tall stems, like aisles leading to a confessional. There were no bosky dells and leafy coverts, no coquettish half-hiding, half-revealing recesses, — all was open, patent, unconcealed. And yet there was mystery, significance, — the mystery and significance of long vistas losing themselves in narrowing lines of lofty shafts, of serried ranks of countless, lithe, slender warriors, of rows of grave, inscrutable counsellors met in serious conclave, of something severe, chaste, solemn.

"As you came through the woods yonder," said Salome, breaking the silence, "it was, as I have said, as though it were my own youth coming to greet me; for it was thus, when I was as young as you, and — yes, I think as fair — "

"Fair! You were beautiful — you are

beautiful now, Salome!" broke out the girl, impulsively, struck as she had been often before by the superb quality of Salome's statuesque features and head crowned with heavy reddish hair.

"It is long since I have heard so," and she paused, as if in passing curiosity. "Well, beautiful or not, I came through a wood on such a spring morning as this, only it was an English wood and an English spring, and I came through it to meet my lover." Her voice was as impassive as though she spoke of Copton's carpenter-work; but Content drew her breath quickly — Salome's lover! — her fancy flew before the youthful Salome's steps to catch a glimpse of him.

"But it was in something deeper than perplexity that I went — rather, in a stirring tempest of wrath and sorrow. For it was no free air that I breathed in my haste; it was heavy with the sighs of the oppressed, and the sky itself was obscured by the shadows that fell from the giant growth of religious tyranny." Whenever she left her personal story for that of public wrong, her voice thrilled with an emotion that moved Content unspeakably. "Yonder Stuart who hath gone to his account

was on the throne, and Wentworth, his tool and his victim, sought to pleasure him by casting away his birthright. There were patriots left who held to theirs, thank God; but 'death came up into our windows and entered into our palaces.'"

The rhythmic words of the prophet fell from her lips with tragic significance.

"Thou knowest the story, child, why do I tell it thee? Mine is but one of many — but I had seen my sister's husband, a minister of God, and one who gave his goods to feed the poor, put into the pillory for refusing to force his people to kneel at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; I had seen Degory Copton bleeding and mutilated by the hands of the hangman for being one of his congregation —" she half closed her eyes an instant, and Content's were full of indignant tears. "Blood and suffering are not pleasant things to see, and I had seen them both that day; and even the sweetness of an English spring could not soften for me the look in Degory Copton's unflinching face. He is not altogether such an one as our leaders, in things secular and ecclesiastic, Content," said Salome, almost with a smile; "but forget not that he stood in the

iron furnace of the land of Egypt and uttered no cry!"

"I have never forgotten it," sobbed Content.

"No, I warrant thee," and the older woman turned upon her a rare look of affection, "thou art of the blood of the saints! And he who met me that day, he, too, was molten in the heat of resentment and of sorrow. He, too, thought that the earth should mourn and the heavens above be black." Insensibly, an accent of sarcasm crept into her full tones. "And he loved me, and my heart was in his hand to do with as he liked — all but one thing! — and it was in a sacred madness of love and patriotism and conviction that we resolved that day to join a company that sought a new country, where should be an iron pillar and brazen walls against those who sought our hurt, and where upon all the glory there should be a defence!" The winds sighed in the tops of the pines, breathing a note of solemn regret across the silence that fell between the two women. "And up to the time of our setting forth for that new land with its new altars," went on Salome, "none strove more earnestly than he to forward all things for our favorable depart-

ure. None was more ready in eloquence, none fiercer against oppression. And I — seeing how his heart was set upon higher things, yet swayed, strengthened, inspired by his love for me — I loved him the more." Content listened, in motionless absorption, as the slow, clear words fell from the firm lips. The story thrilled her with the passion of a crisis; yet it had all happened so long ago, — so long ago, she said to herself, as she glanced about her at the unbending trees. "And yet — and yet — when we set sail, our hearts brimming with sorrow and with hope, when the burden was heavy upon our spirits, and our courage leaped forward to lift it — then he was not with us."

"What! he stayed behind!" exclaimed Content, breathlessly.

"He stayed behind. His heart failed him. He ran with the footmen, and they wearied him. In the land of peace they wearied him, and he could not abide the swelling of Jordan!" The prophet of old had pronounced his condemnation, and there was nothing to add to it.

"And —" Content paused.

"And I? I had a written message. Thank God, I was not his wife. He entreated me

and advocating of opinions that would have withheld thee and me from consecrating our children to the Lord?"

"I would not forget that thy friend Roger Williams is of them, and that thou hast before now found it hard to pronounce him one outside of the kingdom."

"I pronounce no man out of the kingdom. It lieth with Papistical arrogance to claim the keys of heaven and hell. But I have often enough bade thee remember that the life of Roger Williams and his opinions are widely different things."

"And I would bid yonder magistrate remember that a man's life and his opinions are widely different things." Mistress Cradock's cheeks burned with indignation.

Cradock turned as he was going towards the open door of his house. "There be no talk of a man's life," he said, replying to her tone as well as her words.

"And who will answer for the life of Obadiah Holmes, if he be whipped in the street, on a day like this, the burning sun above beating down upon his head, — the head of a minister of God!"

"He is a man who loveth disturbance," said

Caleb, and the words were spoken more on the defensive than he meant them to be. "Mr. Governor would give him his fill."

"Mr. Governor hath a keen eye for apostasy," said Elizabeth Cradock, half under her breath.

"And let you and me give thanks that he seeketh not to divide the inheritance with them that are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise!"

Mistress Cradock did not answer; perhaps she felt that she had said enough, perhaps she was not sure how much further her emotion might carry her. She stood a moment in the doorway, looking towards the town. It was a sultry day in the latter part of July, and the motionless heat seemed part of a general depression that hung over the streets.

"I would that Content had chosen another morning for giving Mistress Dotey her company," she said in a tone touched with anxiety.

"It was for to-day Mistress Dotey craved it, was it not?"

"Yes; but it is but a matter of buying a gown or two and some things for the plenishing of her new house,— it would have done as well to-morrow."

"Mistress Dotey is a good friend, — let her request be heeded, — she would ever heed thine."

"Truly, I would not disappoint her in any essential thing, but — " she did not finish her sentence, as she took up some household task, sending after her absent daughter an earnest wish that she should meet with nothing that should cause her suffering. She knew so well her sensitive sympathies that somehow resisted the bracing influence of her stalwart convictions.

Meanwhile Content was passing along the sunny street, her spirit pleasurably elevated by the thought of her prospective tour among the shops, and casting glances at the fineries exposed for sale, with the critical appreciation of a vicarious purchaser. The town wore an aspect of prosperity, notwithstanding the relaxing heat. A trading-ship had just arrived from the West Indies, and there was a crowd at one of the docks, watching her unload. But beyond the normal activity of the place, there was an added interest that drew groups of men together, and lent a special earnestness, if not a shade of sadness, to their tones as they paused to exchange opinions. That it was a serious matter, Content did not need to be told, when

once she had remarked the glances thrown towards the church, where the magistrates were now considering a question of importance. She remembered that this was the day for the trial and sentence of Obadiah Holmes, the companion of the Reverend Mr. Clarke, lately inciter of Anabaptist disturbances in Lynn. Mr. Clarke had been dismissed on payment of a fine; but Holmes had been longer detained in custody. As she crossed the road by the corner of the training-field, she was delayed by a sudden increase in the number of foot-passengers.

"His Excellency Governor Endecott is coming," she heard some one say as she paused, and in another moment she caught sight of the halberds borne by the guard of state. She looked half-curiously, half-shrinkingly, at the stern man to whose massive features the dark moustache and imperial imparted an added sombreness, who with fine dignity of carriage, and the haughtiness of one who sees no danger of faltering and no opening for indecision, passed on his way in the direction of the church. She was glad her fate was not in his hands, she said to herself, this sultry morning, which seemed inauspicious, she knew

not why. Before she had gone on much further, two figures which she knew well drew near. She had seen the two together before on a summer day two years ago. One was that of the aged, beloved, and honored pastor of the church of Boston, and the other that of Israel Glover. She was startled by the change in the latter. He was still haggard and worn, and the sternness of his glance had deepened; but the indomitable will of the man had conquered whatever had threatened to overthrow it, the bitterness of a lashing restlessness had gone; prayer and fasting had driven it forth. They went by very near Content, as she waited on the edge of what was almost a crowd.

"Better hypocrites and tares, than thorns and briers," said Mr. Cotton, firmly, if somewhat sadly, in the ear of his companion, as he passed on, respectfully and affectionately saluted by those about. Glover bowed in assent.

"Jehovah hath set us over the nations to root out and to pull down, as well as to build and to plant," he said solemnly.

Content found Mistress Dotey waiting for her, and filled with the enthusiasm attendant

on a day given over to trade; but, nevertheless, the shadow that had seemed to have fallen upon the city was not without its effect upon her genial spirit.

"Hast heard that yonder Obadiah Holmes of Providence Colony waiteth sentence, and that some say that he is to be made an example of? Alack, the very words have a distasteful ring in my ears!"

"I saw something of it as I came," returned Content; "and I have heard mention of Mr. Holmes and Mr. Clarke; but I know not that I understand what it is so much amiss that they have done."

"I think it is not so much what they have done, as what they would do," opined Mistress Dotey. "Tell me, doth my bonnet become one as far on in years as thy mother's friend? Ah, thou hast a tongue more flattering than is permitted in our colony of simple speech! Well, then, I will believe it is but thy affection speaks! I know not all the ins and outs of it, for there must be ins and outs to make it a punishable offence to come and visit, in the bonds of Christian fellowship, yonder Goodman Witter of Lynn — yes, verily, that is what is charged against them! — well, perhaps a

thought more. That print of thine doth marvellously suit thy clear skin, child; thou shouldst have a lutestring silk of the same color! They did, it is true, enter into the meeting-house on a Lord's day, and, being then in custody, did rise and exhort after their manner, tending to Anabaptism, and thus disturb the orthodox communion, which was most unseemly, but scarcely, after all, a matter fit for whipping."

"Whipping!" gasped Content.

"Nay, look not pale, sweetheart, or the color of thy gown will not save that of thy cheeks! Thou hast not that familiarity with the whipping-post that we of another generation learned too early. And indeed I know not that it will be carried out to the letter. Come, lift up thy skirt from the dust; there be such coming and going on our streets that they be hardly the place for a lady's foot."

Content followed her guide with a heavy heart. Much affected by Salome's story, she had seen visions and dreamed dreams of the cruelties that had been sharp enough to so move this impassive woman; she did not remember that she was now so impassive because she had once been so impressionable. Were

these cruelties now to begin in Content's own land? Her heart cried out in revolt against the possibility. She knew that there was a whipping-post, she had seen it often enough on her way to church; but she had fancied it devoted to the most hardened sort of offenders; and now that the lash was about to fall upon a man whose Christian zeal had led him into error, it seemed to her an awful thing. Instinctively her thought turned to Mr. Williams — were he here, surely he would move heaven and earth ere it were permitted; she had a sudden revelation of the beauty of his creed, as opposed to the violence of these avengers.

"Are they not friends of Mr. Williams?" she asked as they entered a shop together.

"Ah, yes," sighed Mistress Dotey; but a sigh of Mistress Dotey's seemed incapable of expressing utter and acute discomfort. "They be friends of Mr. Williams, and, it may be, fruits of that blessed man's grafting. I would that his conscience were more of the usual pattern."

"But a man must live according to his convictions," said Content, almost mechanically.

"Yes, but first I would that a man should live! Show me some sarcenet for a hood-

lining," she said to the merchant who was displaying his wares; "and see it be of a quality suitable to my condition and thine."

An hour later, Content and her companion stood near the training-field, not far from the spot where the former had been detained in the morning.

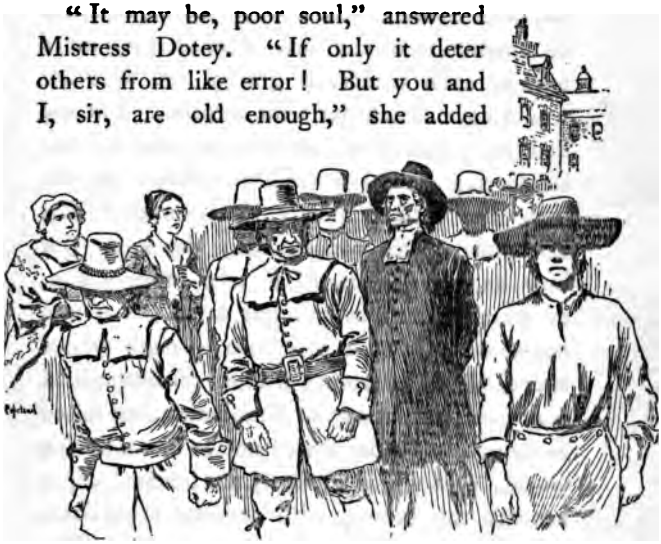
"Who come hither?" said Mistress Dotey, her attention drawn for a moment to a small concourse of people which was approaching. "I think a whisk of yonder lace —" she resumed, "or wouldst thou have the silk, Content?"

Content did not answer either query, as her eyes fixed themselves on the crowd of figures. With a quickness born of her grieved excitement, she divined its meaning, and waited motionless, but with a wildly beating heart and a sudden choking in her throat, while the air seemed to grow more stifling, and her will fluttered against the inevitable.

"Verily, I believe it be the unhappy Mr. Holmes!" exclaimed the older woman, with an accent of apprehension, tempered by a lively curiosity. The crowd drew nearer, and where they stood it must pass them almost near enough to brush their garments.

"He hath learned what manner of tolerance the Bay hath for errors subversive of its dearest teachings," said a grave man standing near.

"It may be, poor soul," answered Mistress Dotey. "If only it deter others from like error! But you and I, sir, are old enough," she added



"All her shuddering attention."

shrewdly, glancing askance at the stranger, "to know that punishment of error hath not ever had that effect."

Their words sounded distant and almost unfeeling in Content's ears. With all the

fervor of her generous youth, she rebelled against the rigidity of conviction that would make suffer.

It was a very quiet concourse that surrounded the chief figure; there were no taunts, no noisy demonstration of any sort. Had she been more used to such scenes, its gravity and decorum would have struck her with surprise. But she had no standard of comparison, and all her shuddering attention was concentrated on the man who walked quietly in the midst. She saw none of his companions; she knew not how he was surrounded or who brought him, or whether he was brought at all; she was conscious only of a pale face through whose exceeding pallor shone a look of triumph, a gray head, not bowed in humiliation, but raised as though its owner feared not to face a hostile world; eyes which looked from unusual depth beneath the brows, with devoted enthusiasm and fearless confidence enkindling them. The thin hair about his temples was wet and matted by the excessive heat; fatigue had drawn blue circles beneath the eyes; and he walked slowly, like a weary man. Across his cheek a scratch had drawn blood; it was the result of accident, but Content did not know this; she saw the red

stain, and her fancy shuddered from the vision it suggested. All the images called up by Salome's story, all the hints and descriptions that had fallen from the lips of her mother and father, crowded upon her. The passionate resistance to an authority which wielded the whip and the branding-iron, which was her heritage and her sacred possession, swept her in its current of rebellious pity. It seemed to her that to this new land had come the horrors of the old, and she grew faint and reeled backward from the dizzying excess of emotion.

"Your young friend feels the heat over much, I fear," said the grave stranger, courteously, as the crowd passed on.

His words came to her through a gathering blackness, and with a startled exclamation Mistress Dotey caught her in her arms Almost immediately, however, she began to recover herself.

"I shall not fall," she said, forcing her lips to move; "let us rest a moment," and she walked steadily, if somewhat slowly, through the now vanishing blackness to a rude seat that was near, and sank down upon it.

"Mistress Content," said a slow, scornful voice at her side, "hath had a notable oppor-

tunity to see how merciful, beside that of merciless England, is the secular arm of her own country."

As Content turned and, looking over her shoulder, raised her eyes to his, in unconscious appeal, Stukely started forward.

"A curse on the government, whatever it be!" he exclaimed, flinging discretion to the winds in his wrath, as he dropped on one knee beside her, "that has blanched thy cheeks whiter than snow, and brought tears to thy dear eyes!"

Shocked at his impiety, she sought for words and found none. The things most precious to her soul, for which she was so ready to contend, had had a grievous blow; dimly she felt herself at the mercy of this caviller. But the scorn had all left his voice.

"Prithee," he implored, "answer me not, but let me do somewhat, bring thee somewhat," and he slipped his arm around her. "How canst thou weep for such a meddler? Believe me, his scourging was of the lightest! All the controversies of the colony are not worth thy little finger —" how far he might have gone on it were difficult to say, for though Content did not yield to the strong support of his arm,

in her physical weakness and mental distress, she felt, with a moment's blind gratitude, that it was that of a man who was at one with her in her hatred of this tyranny. But Mistress Dotey, who had been startled by Stukely's appearance, and still further by his imprudent language, returned to her duties as chaperon.

"Young Mistress Cradock is in my charge," she said stiffly. "Mr. Stukely may rest assured she will come to no harm."

"I am quite myself again," added Content, calmly, though her lips trembled, as she drew herself decidedly away from him. Stukely sprang to his feet and swept Mistress Dotey a low bow.

"Forgive the impatience of one who hath not thy wisdom," he exclaimed. "That, and thy readiness of resource, should have saved my anxiety; but it affrights one ignorant as myself to see the color that now comes back to Mistress Content's countenance so utterly banished."

Mistress Dotey was prone to favorable construction in the case of such appearance and courtesy as this young man's; but the fear of Caleb Cradock was before her eyes.

"I am thankful she is so far recovered," she

said, as Content rose; "and we will bid thee adieu, Master Stukely."

The trimming of her full gown caught on a splinter of the rough seat as she turned, and held her prisoner, with her face away from them, and in the instant of disengaging it, Stukely found time to murmur in Content's ear, —

"I shall come anon to bid thee farewell — that thou canst not deny me!"

In spite of the crushing sense of oppression that still held her in its grasp, she knew that the word farewell fell heavily upon her spirit; and as she returned the salute with which he accepted his dismissal, she for the first time noticed that Stukely himself was pale, and that his usual debonair confidence had given place to a look of hardness touched with anxiety. She had gone but a few steps when she said softly, —

"I must go back to my home, dear Mistress Dotey. I have no heart for more."

"Aye, truly, sweetheart, thou art over white yet," said the warm-hearted woman. "And my own taste for junketing is somewhat quelled. Well, it will be but for another day — and I will then have the pattern of the coif,

which were even better. Come, we will go back, and I will see thee all but to thine own door."

Grateful for her sympathetic acquiescence, Content turned towards home, Mistress Dotey, as good as her word, accompanying her within sight of its chimneys, but refusing her hospitable invitation to go further. The girl walked on alone, finding no pleasure in the luxuriance of the summer, as it kindled a blue haze upon the horizon and darkened into splendid density the green shade of the trees. Keenly sensitive, devoutly patriotic, austerely religious, truths which to many a later generation have grown either so trite that they rouse no emotion, or altogether an empty sound, were to her breathing, throbbing realities. Her country's honor was her own; its great men were her lawgivers; but, nevertheless, she could pay no blind allegiance. That inner monitor trained to divine, beneath the superfluous, the vital presence of the essential, and to tremble at a vacillation from the eternal verities, demanded that her country and its lawgivers should be right. A fierce sense of the injustice of the constituted authorities, a resentful grief for their treatment of an un-

wise enthusiast, and a bold questioning of their interpretation of things spiritual, burned silently in the breast of one thoughtful Puritan girl; but so bound up with her existence and that of those about her were the contraries of these things, that she trembled with a startled excitement as though she had actually raised a standard of revolt.

"I cannot find thy brother Timothy," said her mother, meeting her at the door. Mistress Cradock was too preoccupied with her anxiety to give even passing note to her daughter's pallor and shadowed eyes. "He was about in the dooryard before thy setting forth, and I have not seen him since. I have been to the haying field, and looked over to the meadow, whither he sometimes goes to gather flowers; but he was in neither place."

"Perhaps he has followed Degory Copton," suggested Content, one agitation superseding another, for she was passionately devoted to her little brother.

"He never follows him without express permission from thy father or me. I have had a foreshadowing of evil since early morn; and I thought it but the depression due to the trial of an unfortunate man, that —" she hesitated.

"I know," said Content, dully.

"But now I fear — I fear that something has come to my child!"

Mistress Cradock had borne the weight of anxiety alone for several hours, and it had shaken her customary calm good sense.

"Hast seen Salome?"

"Salome passed by hours ago, and gave me greeting. He was not with her, and he would not be at her empty house."

"There be many places he may be in;" Content forced herself to speak confidently.

"I have searched them all," replied her mother; "I would thy father would return."

Content went out to the highway, and looked up and down, as though she should see the sturdy little feet kicking up its dusty solitude.

"Timothy!" she called in her clear, voice, "Timothy!" It was not likely to do good, but it was a relief to do something.

The hours went by, and the boy did not return. For a hungry child to fail to come to his noontide meal, was, in itself, matter enough for anxiety, and such eccentricities of conduct were not at all in Timothy's way. He moved in his serious, if happy little orbit with

regularity and obedience to the laws laid down for him by a higher power.

Caleb Cradock returned and, hearing of his son's disappearance, went out again. The self-restraint of the Puritan atmosphere forbade outcry or disturbance; and Mistress Cradock bade herself meditate on the justice of the will of God. Nevertheless, as it grew darker, she went more restlessly about with misery in her eyes; but there were no sobs or tears. Content, who felt that the day had laid upon her heart burdens which would well-nigh break it, showed her agitation only in the swiftness with which she hastened to accost every wayfarer with the question — Had he or she seen a little boy named Timothy? — Timothy Cradock?

Between seven and eight Cradock returned a second time. He had procured the assistance of several neighbors, including Copton; and Crackston had long since cried a lost child through the streets. Elizabeth met him without the house; but he had nothing of comfort to give her. His own face was set in rigid lines.

"It is the will of God, Elizabeth," he said briefly.

"My child is hungry and tired," said Mis-

tress Cradock, clasping and unclasping her hands, "hungry and tired, my little child."

It was as if the greater dangers had escaped her thought, and she was overcome by the lesser, from which she had been always ready to shield him.

"Others have been hungry and tired," said her husband, turning towards her suddenly; "and why not thy son?"

She did not answer; but she was not repelled by the hardness of his saying. The compressed lips, the light of rebuke in his eyes, did not conceal from his wife the tenderness that sought in uncompromising rigor an outlet for the emotion otherwise held in check.

The soft, late darkness of the summer night was falling, the fireflies were flitting and flashing over the low lands, and the insect chorus had waxed loud, when Content's strained eyes saw Copton approaching, and flew to meet him.

"Nay, I have no news, Mistress Content," he said as his dimmer vision recognized her, "leastways, no news that is particular as to time or place. But we met Mistress Salome yonder, just as we were scattering to search the woods and," his voice fell, "the pond this side of Goodman Baulstone's, and she said to

me, 'The child is safe, Copton,' and more than that she would not say, but shaked her head and passed on — you know the folly of bidding Mistress Salome speak when she would keep silence."

"Yes — yes; but she said the child was safe! Were those, indeed, her very words, Copton? — but thou wouldst not mistake at such a pass! Hear you that, mother?" she called to Mistress Cradock, who, seeing them in parley, was hastening from the house; "Salome saith Timothy is safe."

"But where is he, then?" she demanded, for she had passed the comfort of theories, and would be satisfied but by the concrete.

"That will we soon know, Mistress," said Copton, briskly. "Your worshipful husband did send me back to see if any word had come from Mistress Salome ere we go on."

Elizabeth Cradock shook her head sadly and turned back to the doorway.

"The executioner should take my right hand to keep company with my ears," said Copton, with grim seriousness, "to keep harm from the child."

Content shuddered.

"Say not so!" she exclaimed. "Pray God

no harm come to my brother; but speak not of such vengeance even to save him!"

Copton peered curiously into her face through the gloom.

"There be certain ones upon whose hands peace lies heavy if it give them no chance to cry aloud for Zion," he observed dryly; "remember thou that for thy comfort, Mistress. But who comes hither?"

Content leaned forward and sought to pierce the enveloping dark with the throb of hope that comes to every watcher with the sound of an approaching footstep. In the opposite direction from that in which Copton had come, Stukely emerged from the shadow of the overhanging trees into the lighter open space, with a burden in his arms. Content sprang towards him with a joy that quivered beneath the weight of a terrible fear.

"He but sleeps — our young counsellor but sleeps, Mistress Content!" said Stukely, in a gay voice; "I found him wearied but unharmed, where he had lost his way, being much cumbered, doubtless, with affairs of state."

"Put me down," said Timothy, a moment later, waked by the commotion; he was quite

annoyed to be discovered in so dependent a position. And Stukely stepped back, smiling, while Copton's trembling hands stroked the boy's shoulders, as he stood with his mother's arms around him, as if to assure himself that his one idol was uninjured.

"I followed a brook," announced Timothy with sleepy circumstantiality, "to procure a little frog for my sister Content. It was a hard frog to come at, but I have it here for thee," and his small, soiled, moist hand unclasped itself, and deposited a little green, shiny object upon Content's open palm.

The girl looked down at the awkward and immature organism which had ceased, some hours earlier, to fight against its environment; and the rush of her joy filled her eyes, while her lips broke into laughter.

"Thou art pleased to have it?" asked Timothy, with a certain anxiety, from his mother's arms. "Thou wert curious about how frogs began, and Goodman Degory did tell me it was once a tadpoles."

"It is a most excellent little frog, sweetheart," assured Content, — "a treasure indeed." She had never yet disappointed him at such a crisis, and if reproof was to be administered

this time, it should be by other lips than hers. Indeed, the matter of reproof was in danger of being held indefinitely in abeyance. Timothy had been led into the house, and Content, with Copton, was hearing Stukely's account of the matter, when Cradock appeared, a neighbor's boy having hastened to bring him the news of Timothy's return. Much as he disliked and distrusted Stukely, and greatly as he would have preferred to owe his relief to another man, he thanked him with grateful courtesy, and begged him to enter his house that he might thank him more at leisure.

"Nay, nay," said Stukely, treating the matter with his usual light civility, "it was naught, believe me. I found young master Timothy by the least of accidents."

"By the leading of the hand of God, say rather," admonished the Puritan.

"As you will," returned Stukely. "But I found him within a thicket, growing close down to a brook, which I had penetrated to find a rare plant I had heard Mistress Salome desired, and which I had sought an hour or two without success. And had I not found him, Nishokou, the Indian, would have done so a moment later — he knowing of your anxiety,

which I did not — for I passed him but a step further on. Nay, I thank thee, Mr. Cradock, I will not enter with thee to-night; but I crave thy permission to come to-morrow to say farewell to Mistress Cradock and to thy daughter."

The two men held each other's eyes through the dimness, while Content's heart stopped beating an instant. The courtesy and justice of the Puritan triumphed over his unwillingness and his knowledge of the dangerous advantage afforded Stukely by circumstance. He could refuse the rescuer of his only son nothing in reason, however the favor might be disclaimed.

"They will see you, Master Stukely," he said, "and give you Godspeed for thy service of to-day."

As the little group separated, Copton limped away alone.

"How many blue beans be there in five?" he said to himself. "About as many as there be black beans or white, I reckon. But though I be proper glad the child is safe, I wish it had been any other than yonder gallant that had the bringing of him back!"

CHAPTER XII

"This faith to some ideal Good,
Under whatever mortal names it masks,
Freedom, Law, Country, this ethereal mood
That thanks the Fates for their severer tasks,
Shall win man's praise, and woman's love."

"He strove to think—
That the sure way—
Was ever to play life's game with loaded dice."

IT was very still in her father's orchard where Content sat waiting for Cyprian Stukely; even the undertone of the insect world made the upper air seem the more silent. When Cradock had consented to the young man's request for an interview with his daughter, he had consented to the spirit as well as the letter, strict formalist as he was, and resolved to let the interview take place without witnesses. If there was to be any crucial contest of wills, it could come later, since he recognized an obligation to the young man which demanded at least a slight concession. He knew that the laws of the colony against

marriage or even courtship without the consent of parents would prevent any open breach; since Content, however resolute of will or decided of opinion, was not the girl to meet scandal half way, even were Stukely reckless enough to incur fine or detention.

To Content, it seemed unnaturally still this afternoon. It was not so much the fashion then, as it has become later, to identify one's self with Nature, or to picture it waiting upon one's mood, or she might have said to herself that Nature hushed its voices till she came to a decision concerning her future life; for she could not evade the conviction that, even if Stukely asked no question or demanded no response, the hour was a decisive one. She had been re-reading Archer's letter, especially the lines that she had not read to Salome.

"And now my most sweet mistress," they ran, "I would commit thee to the hands of Providence with as tender a prayer as though thou wert not ever in their guardianship, for so must a man feel with his best treasure, however safe it be, still he would take yet another precaution for its safety. When I did follow the desires of those who sent me hither, nor they nor thou knew with what a

sigh I set aside a dearer hope than any save one, of being of service to thy country and mine — since that is one not governed by its dearness, but is one's manifest duty — they nor thou knew not what hope I left unsaid, since to say it were a wrong to thy parents' confidence and to thy inexperience — and yet, didst thou not know? Thou art wiser than I and quicker; wast thou not more skilled to perceive than was I to conceal? Fair Mistress Content, when I come again to thy father's hearthstone, wilt give me that welcome that when I first saw thee standing with wood for its fire in thy arms I craved with my whole soul?"

Content folded the letter again. "It was pretty reading," she said to herself, with a little smile at the conscious inadequacy of her own words. But how should she answer it when Archer should really come? There were moments when her heart seemed to spring forward with its answer. But — and she buried her face in her hands an instant, that she might not seem to confront the indelicacy of the thought that she knew not which of two men she loved! As the emotion ebbed slowly, she forced herself to look at the di-

lemma with more courage. Her habit of reasoning showed her that it was neither unnatural nor shameless. How was she to know that the sentiment she had for Archer, the confidence he had inspired, the admiration that had withstood her own jests, the simple pleasure in his companionship, was one of an enduring quality? She had seen him but a few days altogether, and their separation had lasted two years; surely she might doubt the reality of her attachment to him; he might have become a different man since their last meeting; even as she, she realized, had become a different woman.

And Stukely. Surely he had shown her that he could be tender and gracious — even just. She could never forget that in the whirl of feeling which had nearly swept her beyond the confines of consciousness, his was the voice that had echoed the bitter protest of her soul, his eyes had flashed a scorn like her own upon the triumph of cruelty. Further — a matter perhaps not to be quite so calmly considered — she recalled the impulse of relief in which she had all but yielded to the strong tenderness of his arm, and the quick, pulsing solicitude of his hurried words.

Her own passionate sense of justice warned her to exempt him from the sentence passed upon his half-brother. Salome herself had shown no wish to include him in that condemnation; it was only that she wished her to stop and think — to consider the differences between his training and hers. And he could be tender, too, and comforting to a little child; and the vision of Cyprian with Timothy in his arms, lifting from her spirit so heavy a load, melted her heart in a rush of gratitude. Her father, she was convinced, did him injustice. Because he, and the others who disapproved him, made no allowances whatever, she made the more. And what was it that these judges did approve, — these men who had lived themselves hampered by the bonds of iniquity and fed with the gall of bitterness? Again she saw the pale rapt face and the bleeding forehead of yesterday's victim, and again an outcry rose to her lips. Was it not better to be indifferent, — sceptical, if you will, — than so sure, so strenuous, that one was cruel, vindictive, merciless!

Above her head, amid all the luxuriant green of the apple-boughs, hung a yellowed leaf; and she had been watching it as it fluttered madly

in almost imperceptible currents of air too slight to cause the other leaves to more than barely vibrate now and then; they were almost motionless, but this one leaf seemed the sport of unseen powers, its twisting and turning were so desperate, so spasmodic, so inconsequent. It seemed to her that her mind was like that leaf, at the mercy of forces too trifling to affect any one about her, but sweeping her intelligence and will hither and yon, with threatening uncertainty.

There was a step upon the grass behind her; she turned her head, and saw Stukely coming towards her. He was a little paler than usual; but his manner had lost none of its assurance, save that it was, as it were, voluntarily subdued in the presence into which he had come. He said nothing for a few moments after he had seated himself on the grass beside her; apparently the repose of the cool shade and her companionship was too grateful to need comment.

"Thy mother tells me that the youthful selectman is none the worse for his long fast," he said finally.

"No; but something the worse," said Content, smiling, "for the rebuke that has ended

in confinement within, on this day so favorable for out-of-doors occupations."

"Aye," he assented absently, "punishment must always follow, even though the experience itself bring something in the way of retribution. It be never enough for your men of conscience to see the workings of folly — they must needs hasten its conclusion."

Content shrank from any reference to yesterday's administration of justice; she felt at a cruel disadvantage with this critic from whom she would fain have defended her dearest beliefs, — and how could she defend what was threatened by an enemy within!

"So would you not have laws?" she asked, uttering her own perplexity, while she sought to meet his criticism.

"Not I!" he exclaimed recklessly. "I would not even abide by them an I could help it!"

Something in Content's vexed spirit, to her own dismay, responded to the treason. But discretion withheld her from speech. Timothy's cat prowled around from the front of the house, and began chasing flying grasshoppers. She paused every now and then in her stealthy chase, and looked over her shoulder

to see if they were noticing her. Their eyes followed her with the attention that one gives to trifles when larger matters loom on the horizon.

"Timothy hath punished her for catching birds," said Content; "and she is not quite convinced that we believe not winged grasshoppers be of the bird kind. See how shrewdly she taketh heed of our dispositions!"

"There is thy conscience for thee," said Stukely; "it is no divining rod between good and evil. It is but a fear of a stronger power that worketh, it may be, blindly."

"Hush, lest thou blaspheme."

"How dost know when I blaspheme? It may be that even my levity may interpret. Truth seeketh strange intermediaries."

"Would I could answer thee as thou shouldst be answered."

"An thou canst not, there be none that can.

"Nay, for there be wisdom as well as faith. But there be no intermediaries needed with the divine. It speaketh to each man's soul."

"And how if it speak in contradictions? What didst thou think yesterday, Mistress Content?"

"Alas, I thought not! I suffered!" broke out the girl.

Stukely turned towards her with a sudden impulse to take her in his arms; but the pure dignity of her sadness held him back.

"I knew thou didst suffer, sweetheart," the caressing word slipped out almost unconsciously, and Content did not heed it; "and thou wilt believe now that not all wrong lies on the other side of the water, and that the same leaven worketh among thy worshipful judges whom thou holdest so saintly and incorruptible."

"I said not it was wrong," said poor Content.

"Nay, thou saidst it not with thy lips, but thy spirit cried it aloud. Listen. Dost hear the untiring murmur of the insects in the grass?"

"Yes," assented Content, wondering.

"And what meaning does it bear to our ears? Naught save the idleness of a summer day. Yet it meaneth more to them, since they have life. To them it is labor, love, conflict, suffering — who knows? So, it often seemeth to me, rises the sound of this His world to Him you call God. He is too far off to catch more

than the murmur of it; you yourself would say we are as nothingness to His greatness,— all merged, sorrow, love, labor, suffering, — aye and sin, — into one languorous, murmurous sound which disturbs Him not a whit."

Content would have closed her ears, but she could not; her will seemed paralyzed, her conscience lulled into insensibility, by the sound of Stukely's musical voice, falling on the air in a sort of dreamy pensiveness, accompanied by the low undertone which he analyzed with what seemed, to her fancy, fatal aptitude. Why could she not find words with which to answer him? Whither had her reason flown?

"Ah, come with me, my sweet," he said. "Let me take thee away from this bleak air to a place where we may be happy without these endless bickerings, where men live and let live without inquiring of things they can never fathom. If our life is but the senseless flutter of a summer day, let us at least sing it away in the sunshine. I love thee! In this Puritan atmosphere, which stifles every free breath I draw, I have found one thing to love with a tempestuous freedom that sets its barriers at defiance. Content, I love thee."

He had taken her hand, and was drawing

her to him with a gentle force that seemed part of this dangerous, stupefying, blinding current that was sweeping her away from every creed and conviction that she cherished. He was handsome, convincing, strong; the passion that looked from his eyes and paled his cheek was no check to his swift sentences, and but softened his gay confidence with a shade of tender grace, without making it humility.

But his touch revealed the danger with a shock of awakening.

"Nay, nay," she exclaimed, drawing back with sudden, sharp resolution. "Thou and I call not the same thing happiness."

Had she doubted, wept, been shocked or frightened, he could have better answered her; but with true insight she had struck the key-note, and while he rebelled, he could not brush aside the recognition of it.

"Child, what dost thou know of happiness?" he demanded impatiently. "Here in thy narrow, restricted, barren world, where the shadow of the fear of the next never lifts —"

"Not so," she said more quietly, but not less positively. "It is thou and others like thee that would steal into that shadow with thy

vision of an unheeding God; but thou canst not take me with thee."

"I tell thee, then, that it is His world as well outside this arbitrary little colony, which shall struggle and assert and govern itself, till the hour when our great England shall look over with a smile at its self-sufficiency and put forth a finger to curb its contumacy!" his scorn for this day of small things would not be kept back, though he was so far from seeking to antagonize Content; "after which it will know its nothingness beside that greater world to which I would take my beautiful Puritan."

"It is my country," and Content's young head was thrown back in unuttered protest against his arrogance.

"And what hath thy country done for thee, that thou shouldst rate it so high? I promise thee that my own greater country hath not done so much for me that I owe it any heart-breaking allegiance!"

"What hath my country done for me?" she repeated slowly, while she looked at him in wondering regret. "Is it naught that it hath taught me the meaning of great words? And it hath given me protection, and I live in its

shelter. And it hath gifts of inspiration for those that are worthy of them!" she exclaimed, with shining eyes; "and it is a hope and a defence — and a thing to love!" Stukely laughed scornfully.

"Abstractions all, Mistress Content," he said, — "the palest of abstractions! Ah, believe me," he urged, his voice falling again into its caressing tones, "there are better things than abstractions. There is one's own life, and one's own bliss, and — yes, the delight even of one's own danger! And the joyousness that shines from the faces of those who are happy and who laugh, and who fight for the love of good fighting, and are gay for the very love of gayety, — these are better things, most fair Content, than the love of country that one prateth of. Truly, it is the land that gives these things that is verily one's own!"

That "greater country," to which they both owed so much, even if of late it had fallen upon evil days, — splendid, opulent England, with its legends, its memories, its supremacy, and its future, — had he no further word than that to say, even of England! In a flash of insight she recognized, through all his charm, the materialism of the man, though not thus would

she have named it. And beside it, in poignant contrast, she saw the highmindedness of another. Instinctively she knew that now there was not, perhaps never had been, any real danger of actual and disastrous self-misunderstanding. "A dearer hope than any save that of being of service to thy country and mine," said the one, "since that is one not governed by its dearness, but is one's manifest duty." "What hath thy country done for thee?" asked the other. The intense patriotism, the perception of the spiritual, of this girl who so cherished the memories of the Puritan saints that the flame of her devotion burned day and night, recognized its true comrade.

In spite of his last outburst, Stukely saw from her face that things were going against him; and yet now he was misled by a transient hope, for she looked at him with a certain tender gratitude; she could have thanked him for showing her her own soul.

"And, my heart," he said softly, "I cannot, I will not give thee up. Since it must be thy church and state — in the name of high Heaven! —" his impatience flamed forth again, even through the passionate utterance of love — "let it be mine! If the good French king

thought his kingdom worth a mass, surely, my beautiful Content, thou art worth even a brace of the unending sermons of thy Puritan Sabbath!"

Content gently shook her head. His passion and his irreverence alike failed to move her now. He knew not dimly what it was he was so ready to promise.

As she stood in the silent orchard, for they had both risen, and looked out across the flat, green country to the rolling river, and caught, through a break in the boughs, a glimpse of the beacon on the neighboring hill, the words of John Robinson came back to her memory, — household words familiar from her infancy, — "I beseech you — remember it — that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God." What did this young gallant know of a church and state founded on such an exhortation as this? But she knew, and Resolved Archer knew.

New England ideality looked across the breach to the realism of Old England — as it had been and should be.

"Nay," she said, "I think it is not meet to make such exchanges," and she smiled. "Thou

art but an alien in this land of long sermons and Puritan Sabbaths; and I — it is native to me — I know no other air. I think thou wouldst not altogether understand — "

"I understand!" interrupted Stukely, bitterly. "Think not I do not understand. I but beat in vain against the door that is shut upon me,— the door of thy beliefs, thy traditions, thy superstitions, and thy fears — " he paused an instant, — "it may be, too, of an earlier love."

She neither affirmed nor denied. They had both risen, and they faced each other, a touch of the indomitable in his bearing and in hers. Her silence stung him into further bitterness.

"Yes, it may be that while I have been fighting without the wall I have been undermined by the steady progress of a more fortunate enemy who hath everything in his favor, and that Mistress Content Cradock is already betrothed — " Content shook her head.

"She is not. Had it been so, thou shouldst have known it before speech had gone so far between thee and me," she said proudly.

"Well, be that as it may, I am worsted — worsted on all sides!" he exclaimed. "That

a child may see. And whether fate or my own folly be most to rail at, I know not. But, Mistress Content —" he stepped towards her and caught her hand to his lips. How much further a mad impulse might have carried him was left undetermined, for Caleb Cradock was on his way across the yard between them and the house. His brows were bent above his stern eyes; but if there was wrath there, it was held under absolute control.

"I see thou be saying the farewell I come somewhat to hasten," he said, with distant courtesy. Stukely let fall Content's hand, and stood waiting for what he felt sure were ill-tidings, while the illumination of his glance gave place to smiling indifference.

"Content," said Cradock, turning to his daughter, "thou dost know that the efforts of our colony towards amicable relations with them of England, and the consequent preservation of our liberties, have somewhat miscarried of late by the ill-will of certain unknown agents who sought to sow the seeds of suspicion and distrust?"

"Yes," answered Content, with surprised attention.

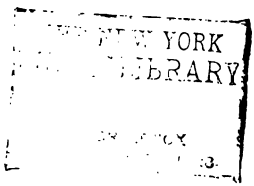
"And, also, that the Colony of Providence has had a share of these ill turns, and that its friends, as well as our own, have found at every step lies to contradict and suspicions to controvert?"

"So I have heard thee say." Content glanced in perplexity from her father to Stukely, and back again. Cyprian, who had known what was coming from the first words, stood regarding the Puritan with the same half insolent smile with which he had listened in Salem meeting-house, though his cheek was a shade thinner and paler than it had been, and while he listened he dropped his eyes once, as he turned back a bit of lace at his wrist and looked curiously at it.

"And so, among others, hath Resolved Archer written," went on Cradock; "and there have been occasioned great trouble and perplexity and threatening of our dearest interests. Know then — I tell it to thee, since our guest already is aware of this most precious news,—" Stukely winced almost imperceptibly under the sarcasm of his tone,—"that it be young Mr. Cyprian Stukely who hath done us this special disservice."

"What!" exclaimed Content, breathlessly.

"'*Seek not* the hilt of thy sword. This is no quarrel between me and thee.'"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"It be young Mr. Stukely who hath twisted and distorted some facts, and hath manufactured certain others, — seek not the hilt of thy sword, young gentleman, this is no quarrel between thee and me, were it my practice so to settle quarrels! — and hath so gleaned and treasured idle words and the murmurings of malcontents and traitors, and hath so transmitted them to those whose interest it is to embroil us with the mother country, that had his design not been ferreted out and brought home to him, it might have caused incalculable and cruel danger to our liberties. It be a noble office, this, and there be names apportioned to its nobility which I apply not to a guest within, as it were, my own doors."

The fine, controlled anger of the older man bent before it the insolence of the younger. Not quite so baldly, so divested of all euphemism, had his employment revealed itself to Stukely. Even his arrogance shrank from the epithets which the self-restraint he had so often ridiculed withheld, but which announced themselves so clearly to his intelligence. Involuntarily Content had stepped to her father's side, as if to place herself within his protection, against a treachery which seemed to her stu-

pendous. The slight movement revealed him to his own eyes as he stood in hers; but even at the same time he realized that this disclosure had not created an impassable distance between them, it had but widened it, — the distance had been always there. He opened his lips to speak; but Cradock raised his hand to silence him, and he obeyed the authoritative gesture.

"Master Cyprian Stukely," said Cradock, "yesterday you did me and mine a great service, though it pleased you to put it by as a light one. The Lord chose you for His instrument in restoring to us our only son; and that neither my wife Elizabeth nor I will easily forget. I see in this choice of His a leading that I would fain heed, and it leads to mercy and not to the measure that would be meted to thee if thy punishment should be commensurate to thy offence. An thou be gone from the borders of the colony thou hast sought to injure, before nightfall, there will be none upon thy track, and thou wilt escape the vengeance that follows upon the deeds that none yet know of but I and one other."

"And if I refuse?" asked Stukely, whose soul turned with loathing from the ignominy

of such a retreat in the eyes of Content Cradock.

"And if thou refuse," said the other, in swift, contemptuous warning, "I answer not for thy freedom, nay, not for thy life! This colony hath reserved the right to deal with mischief-makers, and it hath small patience with offenders of a certain sort."

With exaggerated ceremony, Stukely bowed low to Content; he did not dare to touch or speak to her, for her starry eyes blazed with scorn. Since the first impulse towards disbelief, natural to her own fidelity, she had not doubted her father's judgment, and Stukely's own words had helped, not hindered, her decision.

"Master Stukely," said Cradock, "I would believe that thou knowest not all that thou hast striven to do. Thou art an evil neighbor, and thou hast touched the inheritance of Israel; but it may be that thy hand knew not what it would take away."

His voice had lost its contempt, and was solemn, even sad. "It is not an easy thing," he went on, "to leave the house of thy fathers, even though it hath grown too strait for thee. It is not an easy thing to set up thine

own altar in the wilderness, even though fire come down from heaven to burn the sacrifice. It is not an easy thing to watch and to fight, that the spoiler spoil not the lodge that the Lord hath set in a garden of cucumbers. How then — do thou thyself judge — of one who hath witnessed our fasting and our praying, who knoweth the labor and the stress that hath planted and cherished the green olive-tree, full and of goodly fruit, and who seeketh to kindle a fire upon it that the branches of it be broken?"

On Stukely's ears the Scriptural language fell unrecognized; but the gravity and pathos of the arraignment pierced his recklessness, and silenced him. His eyes fell before the rebuking dignity of the Puritan's glance. Cradock raised his arm and pointed to the highway. "Go," he said; "it is these things that thou hast sought to do. If thou hadst worked thy evil will, thou shouldst not part so lightly. But the Lord will not do unto us as He hath done to Shiloh. But bear this word with thee — 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains;' lest 'while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death!'"

It was not until he reached the high road that Stukely looked back. There he paused an instant and, turning, saw Content still standing by her father's side. In the confusion of his own chagrin, his regret, and his suddenly awakened shame, there was mingled a certain recklessness of relief that he was done, once for all, with the restraint he had been living under; and now these two typified for him this new world to which he had come, and which had chafed and goaded him from the start. There were the undeviating rectitude, the uncompromising austerity, the stringent justice that his soul hated; and there too were the indefinable, pervasive sweetness, and the ideal dignity of this new environment. The sensuous, the lavish, the unrestrained, the excessive, that were native to him, were not here, they had been pruned away and cast out; but in the place of these things there was something rare and delicate. Without a second backward glance he went on and left it behind him.

There was but one farewell he cared to say, and within the hour he entered Salome's door.

"So the bird flies," she said, as he appeared before her. "It is hardly an air for such radiant plumage."

"It is hardly worth a trope, good mistress," he replied with her own irony. "The man who has made a failure of even his villany goes to seek a place where his talents may meet with a more enduring recompense."

"His villany!" she repeated the words thoughtfully.

"Aye, I stand not on a name. I have but just come from an exhortation that would make a greater stickler than I halt not upon a definition. Truly, the worshipful Mr. Cradock hath a gift of prophecy, as I think you call it here. I must say it, — and it irks me sorely, Mistress Salome, but I must say it, — there was a certain dignity in his scorn, and a courteousness even in the abiding contempt of his accusations, that makes it not easy for me to remember that I am despised by men like Caleb Cradock."

The underlying seriousness of this avowal made itself felt through its would-be recklessness. Salome looked at him not unkindly, noting the weariness and the pallor which the varied emotions of the day had left.

"And Mistress Content?" she said softly.

"Will never be Mistress Content Stukely, though were I not talking with a seeress I

might venture a guess as to what she will be," he said; and then, suddenly dropping the disguise of indifference, he let his head rest a moment on his folded arms, as he stood by Salome's high-backed chair, as he added, " and I must leave her behind me, Mistress Salome, — and I shall never see her again ! "

Towards evening of the same day Master Cyprian Stukely took passage on a trading ship setting sail the next morning for the Colony of Virginia.

CHAPTER XIII

"Our love is not a fading earthly flower,
Its wingéd seed dropped down from Paradise."

"Hath Good less power of prophecy than Ill?"

IT was four months later, and Content sat again in her father's orchard. The late autumn had come, but the season was bidding its farewell in soft, dreamy days of Indian summer. The sunlight was still mellow, and the air at midday was still soft and warm; but the sun took with it the mellowness and the warmth when it set in a clear, golden, suffused brilliancy behind the yellowing trees. The birds moved about silently after the more infrequent beetle. There was something occult in their short flights, as they suddenly fluttered from one tree to another in the unbroken silence of wood and field, — unbroken save for the song of the crickets, which had lost its midsummer drowsiness and rose now and then to a very pæan of exultation, ill-placed and ill-judged. The asparagus gone to seed in the gardens was of a pale tan-color, and stood tall

and gently swaying in the rare breaths of the wind, which itself felt the general languor of the stolen days. There was a faint smokiness in the air, — a scent of burning leaves. Some apathetic robins hopped about, their usual self-consciousness tempered by a new indifference and a vague sense of being out of place. Their red had faded to an autumnal brown, — a dull unattractive color; and they uttered an occasional low note of anxiety over the hard times and the lack of general activity. The sleepy cat hardly raised her head to look at them, as they pottered about just in front of her with an air of not caring particularly if they were killed and eaten. Once in a while a yellow leaf fluttered down through the still air, though the prevailing colors were dull, — a bit of woodbine, claret-colored and translucent in the sunshine, being the only patch of vividness in the scene. The winter was coming very late, thought Content, as she looked at the leaf that had last fallen, and she was glad for Mr. Williams' sake, for he was just about to set sail for England. She turned and looked over her shoulder to the highway, but there was no one coming. Something in the warm stillness bore her thoughts back to her last

interview with Stukely. She had waited for him that afternoon, as she was waiting now for Archer, but in so different a mood that her spirit recognized and reposed on the difference. Then, she had been perturbed, perplexed, swayed this way and that, and the stillness had seemed oppressive to her unrest, the yellow leaf, that now sank quietly to the earth, had then fluttered in almost agonizing helplessness; now a mantle of peace had fallen upon her world, and she waited — precisely for what, she did not say to herself, but for something that was certainly not turbulence. Surely that was an approaching step upon the turf! No, it was the measured, deliberate progress of a toad that rustled as it deposited and re-deposited itself amid the withered grass, pausing each time to consider of its next hampered flight. Content laughed aloud, as its large body plumped down beside her, as if she were an unimportant incident in its path.

Archer had reached the port of Boston the evening before, just in time for a farewell interview with Mr. Williams and Mr. Clarke, who were to sail that afternoon; she had heard her father say that they had all spent the evening together.

An apple fell just beyond her, and she started as if it had been a thunderbolt of Heaven, and laughed again at her own absurdity in being so easily startled. She had not realized that her attention had been so strained. She did not know — indeed, what reason she had to know! — but, truly, she had the best reason in the world for knowing — that Archer would come, seeking her, that afternoon. She leaned back, idly, against the tree; she enjoyed her own want of logic, it was a luxury so sure not to cost her unhappiness. She bent forward to see whither the supercilious toad had hurled himself; she could not discover his whereabouts, and when she looked up again Archer stood before her. Her beautiful, wide-open eyes gazed upon him in startled wonder, as she rose to her feet, taking, mechanically, the hand he held out to assist her, but saying no word of conventional greeting. He was changed. He was older, browner, graver. He had always been thoughtful, but he was more thoughtful, and he had the air of a man who has learned to bear responsibilities easily. There was a fine air of repose in his strength. He did not let her hand go, while he, too,

marked the changes of the two years in which Content had grown from a charming, evasive girl into a serene and beautiful woman.

"Mistress Content," he said, and his voice seemed to have caught an added depth of melody, "I parted with thee in the time of spring, when the earth offers us but the sweetness of promise, — a promise which we know not shall be altogether fulfilled, — and I still have the flower that bloomed so early and knew not its fate." Suddenly Content trembled slightly, and looked down; there was a quality in the measured speech that overcame her. "I have come back in the season of fulfilment; is my love to find its fulfilment too? — or must it meet the fate of unwise temerity?" he paused a moment, smiling a little. Content did not raise her head. "Or wilt thou take it and wear it, my sweet, all thy life long?"

The question was very quietly asked, but it thrilled with something that seemed to communicate its own emotion.

"Thou must give it me, first," she said, with a flash of her old raillery, as she raised her eyes at last. "It be not enough that it blossomed!"

"It is thine, sweetheart; it hath ever been thine."

"Is it for me ever to welcome hardy things, lest they suffer from their own presumption?" she asked, smiling, though her eyes were wet. He looked steadfastly down into her face, and she did not withdraw her serene glance.

"Yes, sweetheart, it is for thee!" he answered, in a tone that rang with triumph, as he drew her into his arms.

"I have much to tell thee," said Archer, a little later; "but we must hasten, if we would meet Mr. Williams, who much desired to see thee, that he might bid thee farewell."

"I am ready," returned Content. "Prithee, is it I that am delaying our departure?"

Archer looked down at her as she stood in the checkered shade, and then his glance swept the quiet scene and came back to Content again. He was loth to shorten this happiest hour of his life; but, God be thanked! it was not the last, but the first of hours of such happiness.

"Nay," he said smiling, "thou wert ever quicker than I — yet verily I be straitened till I tell my best friend that the hope of my heart be accomplished."

"Thy best friend?" queried Content, raising to his her radiant eyes, as she walked beside him.

"Nay," he said again, impulsively, "but that brought me to the best."

"Thou must mend thy ways," said Content, sadly shaking her head, "an thou wouldst be a counsellor. Thy speech hath ever a sad trick of contradicting itself that worshipful governors and such cannot away with! I was wont to credit thee with a certain firmness of opinion, and a solid consistency I do now see to be lacking,— most gravely lacking,— why dost thou smile?"

"Because thou art so beautiful, sweetheart," he replied with admirable simplicity; "and when thou dost rail, thy lips take a most unforgettable twist."

"Fie!" exclaimed Content. "Fie upon a man who hath parleyed with the great men of England, and thinketh upon such trivialities! What would yonder General Oliver Cromwell have said, if he had thought that thy memory held such odds and ends of things as the twist — didst say —" she interrupted herself to ask with an adorable ingenuousness, "didst say that while thou wast absent,

thou didst remember aught of such foolishness?"

"It hath been plain to my consideration in the very presence of graver matters, I warrant thee."

"Truly, the folly of the wise passeth understanding. And yet — well, then, I say —" and the lips took an expression not altogether of contentment, "I say I know not what graver matters there be than the thought of — of — what one has left behind one, and certain fashions — I care not what they be! — that should bring such a person to mind — I know not what — to a true perception such as I thought thine — should be graver — thou wouldst laugh — I verily believe thou wouldst laugh! Go thy way then, young Mr. Archer! I will help thee not a whit to observe proportions and occasions."

The subtle languor of the hazy day seemed to have steeped Content's spirit in delicious satisfaction, to have at once intoxicated and lulled. All that had perplexed and dismayed her seemed to have melted away, and to lie, luminous and distant, like the haze on the hillsides, lending to the present happiness an added, though vague and intangible beauty.

She laughed and grew grave, and was capricious and sweetly reasonable, difficult and daintily tender, and every moment more enchanting in Archer's eyes. But suddenly the assurance of her joy seemed to be on the point of leaving her. It was just before they reached the first house upon the street they were to follow to find Roger Williams and Mr. Clarke, to whom the colony, after some difficulty and delay, had granted permission to set sail for England from the port of Boston. On the further side of a stream, here crossed by a footbridge, stood a group having the air of awaiting their approach.

"Yonder, I think, stands my father," said Content, in subdued tones, "and I be somewhat afraid that he will think this an inopportune time — he be sometimes somewhat averse to — to courtship," she concluded, with a smile that quivered.

"Have no fear," said Archer, reassuringly; and they went on together.

Caleb Cradock, his wife, and Timothy watched them as they crossed the narrow bridge, Content giving special and continued attention to her footing and her skirts, and Resolved following her, looking over her head

to those who waited, with superb confidence in his eyes. The wash of the stream, closer at hand even than the murmur of the town, filled in the trifling pause.

"Well met," said Cradock, stepping forward; "we waited here for thee."

"Well met," repeated Archer, with the same triumphant emphasis that had lingered in his tone earlier that afternoon, as he looked steadily, proudly, into the face of the older man. Cradock glanced from him to his daughter. Whatever Content's inward apprehension, she was calm and unquestioning to all outward seeming. The austere Puritan's eyes grew wonderfully kind as they rested on her fair head, and the fine lines of his clearly cut mouth relaxed insensibly. But it was no time for emotion. "Amen!" he said solemnly, almost tenderly, and then after a perceptible pause, "and again I say, Amen!" Then, turning with Archer, he walked on, while Content fell back to her mother's side, with her eyes full of tears.

When they reached the house they were seeking, they found that Mr. Williams and Mr. Clarke had already gone down to their ship, having had word that she might sail earlier

than at first intended, owing to favorable wind and tide. So it was on the dock, with the fresh sea-breeze blowing in their faces, and in the midst of the busy tumultuous life of a town whose thriving trade was carried on so largely by water, that Content again saw the man who had entered her father's quiet home, weary and unannounced, more than two years ago. The months had not changed him as they had Archer and herself. The keen eyes burned with the same energy; the fire was ready to flame forth; and still the fine nobility of the man rescued him from the fretfulness and irritability so often attendant on disputatiousness. He came forward instantly, as he caught sight of the newcomers.

"We are verily but in time to bid thee farewell," said Mistress Elizabeth, with graceful cordiality; "but we could not let go without a Godspeed, the friend whose presence at our door has ever brought its own blessing."

"I give thee thanks, Mistress Cradock," said Williams, with his distinguished courtesy; "it is not every threshold that finds a blessing in the shadow cast across it by a man who has been pronounced an exile; thine hath ever been free to my coming and going — and may the

blessing of the Most High be upon it. And, Master Timothy," he went on, bending to the child, "methinks, he hath passed beyond the exceeding joy of a wooden beast of four legs, and craveth more satisfying pleasures; is it not so?" The smile and the voice asserted their old charm. Here, Timothy felt, was a friend as sympathetic as Goodman Degory, one who not only would listen to the many things he had to tell, but would be edified thereby; still there was a feeling of haste and bustle in the air, and though the worshipful Mr. Williams seemed to have time enough, he felt that it behooved him to be brief. Hastily reviewing the treasure house of his mind, one fact presented itself with special prominence.

"I was lost," he remarked confidentially, "and it may be that I came near to death, — it be certain that I hungered, — and I was found by young Mr. Cyprian Stukely, who hath since departed."

"Aye," said Mr. Williams, with sudden gravity; "I have heard of that young Mr. Stukely. May his saving of thy preciousness be an earnest of his finding again other things that I fear me he hath too wilfully gone about to lose."

Archer had stepped to Content's side, and now Roger Williams turned towards them.

"I have no need to ask thee — is it well?" he said to the young man; "there be signs that a wayfaring man though a fool may interpret — and surely," he added with tender gentleness to Archer's companion, "I need not tell thee that verily I believe it is well — that among the mistakes and errors of a life that hath had many, I reckon not the bringing of a certain young man to the door of a house within which a certain maid sought to replenish a fire bringing warmth and light to the hearts of two travellers. And thou?" he questioned, "what sayst thou to the history?"

Content looked up and smiled as she held out her hand.

"I am content," she said.

"Aye," he answered, "I think thou hast told it all — even Resolved Archer himself can tell me little more — thou art Content. Yes, I come," he said to Mr. Clarke and another who would call him away, for the time was very short. "Bear my farewell to Salome," he added to the girl, "and tell her from me, an she hold communication with Mary Dyar, that she say a word of quietness in her ear. And

now," and his glance took in, in solemn embrace, the young man who was so dear to him, and the slender figure at his side, "may thy love be as the sand which the Lord hath placed for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it! The troublous sea of this world, with its discords and its divisions, though the waves thereof toss themselves, may they not prevail; though they roar, may they not pass over it!"

In another moment he was gone, and Content stood with bowed head, the words spoken by that deep, magnetic voice ringing in her ears with grave, musical insistence. The bustle of departure now grew too importunate for any hope of further speech, so Content and her mother, with Timothy, left Cradock and Archer there, and turned towards home. When they reached the parting of the ways, one of which led to Salome's, Content yielded to the impulse which so often made her seek the uncommunicative but sustaining companionship of the woman that dwelt alone with her memories.

"Mother," she said, "an it please thee, I will stop a moment and speak with Salome. I would give her the farewell greeting of Mr.

Williams. I marvel she was not at the dock to take it in his own voice."

"Yes, truly," answered her mother, smiling, "and there be other things her friendliness for thee will care to hear. But tarry not to tell the story over and over, for the twilight begins to fall."

"I will return ere thou have to say, 'Content is late,'" assured the girl, as she turned into the branching path.

The water crept more softly than ever, up and down the short stretch of sand, and the house looked as lonely and inaccessible as if it knew no commerce with a busy world. But to Content, its loneliness was not dreary or repellent; she had seen the glow that permeated existence here, — the glow of a flame of intensest life, which, if no longer leaping and throwing wide its brilliant reflections, still warmed and illuminated.

"So the doubts have slipped away, and the clouds are dispelled; and all because a young man hath crossed yonder sea the world has become a fair place to Mistress Content Cradock," said Salome's full, half-jesting, half-caressing tones. Few but this visitor ever caught this gentlest inflection.

"Mistress Salome," exclaimed Content, impulsively speaking the question so often near her lips, "how didst thou know?"

"How did I know?" repeated Salome, looking down, as she stood in her doorway, at the upturned, flower-like face. "Wouldst thou have me give to a girl like thee the secret of the power that the gossip of the colony credits me withal? Ah, child, seek not my wisdom! It fits not with happiness like thine!"

"And doth thy wisdom tell thee that my happiness will abide with me?" asked Content, with a sudden wistfulness, the result of the day's emotion, the brooding quietness of the scene, and the presence of this woman whose life had once brimmed with joy like hers.

"And what doth thy wisdom tell thee?" asked Salome, with smiling tenderness. "There be times when the mouths of babes may instruct the wise and prudent."

"I have heard thy story," answered Content, simply, after a moment's silence, "and yet I am not afraid."

"Then I fear not for thee that thou wilt break thy toy; for thou knowest what care-

less hands have done and may do — and that is better than believing it to be beyond the reach of destruction."

Her voice fell and sank into the silence, as she looked out over the water, which was stained like a painter's palette with crimsons and purples and a trace of opalescent green. Content knew well that wide gaze into the spaces of sky and sea.

"Mr. Williams sent thee his farewell greeting," she said at last; "and he bade thee, an it came thy way, to say a word of quietness to Mary Dyar."

"To Mary Dyar," repeated Salome, her eyes coming back to Content's. "It may be that Mr. Williams somewhat distrusteth his own power to assuage, that he sendeth to me," she mused, smiling slightly. "It be hard to lay aside the trumpet for the pipe! An thou hadst come to me with thy tale two years ago," she said, going back abruptly to their former subject, "I should not so have commended thy discretion."

"Two years ago, — methinks I had no tale to tell. And truly," she broke out with a little laugh, "I have told thee no tale to-night; it is thyself hath done all the telling."

"And thou hast wondered at my magic. Well, then, truly it be not altogether magical that one hath learned to hear and to see — though it seem so to those who have but eyes

"Content laid her finger on her lips."

and ears! But hither comes one who seeketh thee — who hath sought thee for some time past."

Content looked around hastily, she had heard no step, but now, through the clear luminousness of the evening, she saw Archer approaching.

"I give you both good-even," concluded Salome; "I am in no mood for further tale-telling," and with her usual slow, definite grace she stepped within and softly closed the door.

As Archer came up to her, Content laid her finger on her lips. Salome was singing, — one of the brief songs that occasionally floated out upon the still air from the lonely little house, —

"Love went a-Maying,
While winds were blowing,
Ere Winter's going.
Love's ne'er for staying;
Love went a-Maying;
Since Love is blind,
What will Love find?"

"It is all the greeting she will give thee," whispered Content.

"Love went a-Maying
Ere bees were humming,
Spring only coming;
Love 's all for playing.
Love went a-Maying;
Since Love is blind,
What will Love find?"

Half anxiously, though her lover stood beside her, and she trusted him, Content waited to learn the answer, — or if the song ended

only in a question, — a question that seemed to express a pathos of uncertainty. There was a long pause, and Content, with an unuttered regret that she could not resist, turned to go.

"Love went a-Maying," sang Salome again, and Content waited, Archer, though a little impatient, listening too.

> "One flower is springing,
> One bird is singing;
> What is Love saying?
> Love went a-Maying;
> Though Love is blind,
> Still Love doth find."

"I am glad there was yet another verse," said Content, with a sigh of relief.

"I see not that she hath told us aught that we knew not already without her telling," asserted Archer, stoutly.

"It is that that Salome does," answered Content, thoughtfully. "She tells us things that we knew already — and we give it the welcome of a revelation. And that," and Content, with a sudden change of mood, flashed a look of laughter at his seriousness, "is a thing that neither you nor others of your most worshipful reasonableness will ever quite understand."

They had reached a slight eminence, still

near the water, and as Archer looked out to sea, he caught, through the gathering dark, the white drift of sails, and the gleam of a ship's lantern.

"Yonder," he exclaimed, touching Content's arm and pointing to the dim outline, "yonder speeds Mr. Williams. May God grant him favor and prosperity, and in His good pleasure a swift return; for it seemeth to me that, in his despatching, the Lord hath taken from our young colony the stay, the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water!"

"I wonder what Mistress Salome thinketh of his going and his coming," said Content, her mind reverting to the authority to which she had often appealed to her abiding, if somewhat vague, satisfaction.

"One knowing Mr. Williams as I know him, even if he be of my simplicity, might find something to prophesy," said Archer, thoughtfully. "It may be that her gift of prophecy is no such mysterious matter, since every event, as every character, beareth within itself a certain warrant of what shall follow. It needeth no marvellous divination of a wise woman to know that I loved thee, sweet."

"But it took a wiser woman than I," she

answered quickly, "to know that I loved thee! — and methinks she who knew it first was Mistress Salome."

"Then, be she prophetess or no," said Archer, smiling, "I give Mistress Salome my best thanks, and my heartiest good-will forevermore."

As they stood before Caleb Cradock's house a few moments before entering, two men came along the highway towards them, slowly and with a certain dignity that denoted equality with circumstance.

"Good-even, Copton; good-even, Constable Crackston," said Content, and the men touched their caps.

"I told thee," said Crackston, as they went on into the dusk, speaking comfortably, as one seldom obliged to change his opinion, "that it came not within my reckonin' that Caleb Cradock would let his daughter find a husband in yonder ne'er-do-well that hath left the colony for its own good, no doubt —"

"And it be for his own ill, I would say I care not," interrupted Degory, "were it not for the bringing back of yonder small Timothy, which, be he what he will, would ever incline me to spare him a knock or two."

"I hold not with knocks," said Crackston, judiciously, "save by warrant of law; but what I was saying was this, that Caleb Cradock hath a long enough arm and a short enough to govern his own household."

"And I say," said Degory, with a slight accent of impatience, "that had I known that young Resolved Archer's arm was long enough to stretch across seas, I had ne'er disturbed myself with a thought of young Cyprian Stukely, whether Caleb Cradock's arm be shortened or not."

"And that was a thing that, not knowing young Resolved Archer, nor his whereabouts, nor hardly if he ever did see Mistress Content, — and thus having, as it were, no warrant," said Crackston, with his official deliberateness, "it was a thing that neither of us thought on."

"Aye," answered Copton, after a pause, in grudging, but honorable concession, "that was a thing that neither of us thought on."

And as the two men trudged on, smoking their pipes, the early hush of an autumn night descended upon the Colony of the Bay.

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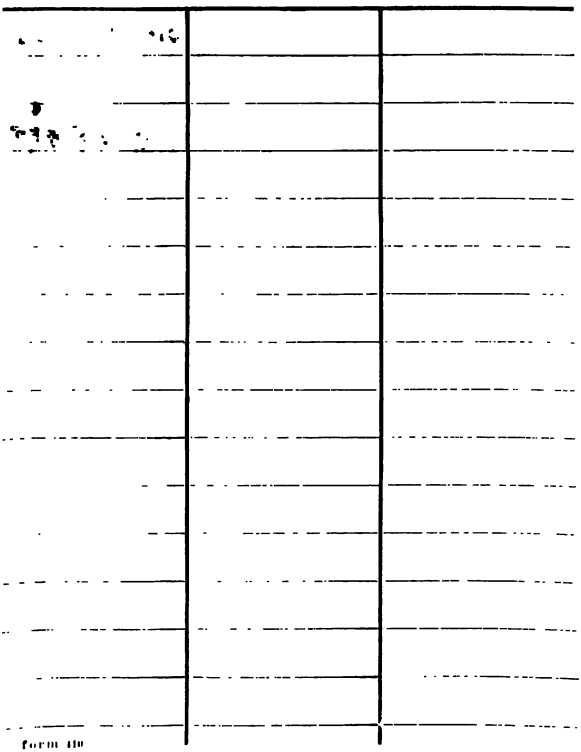
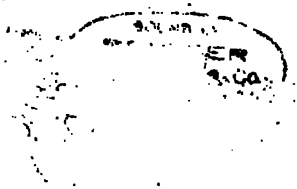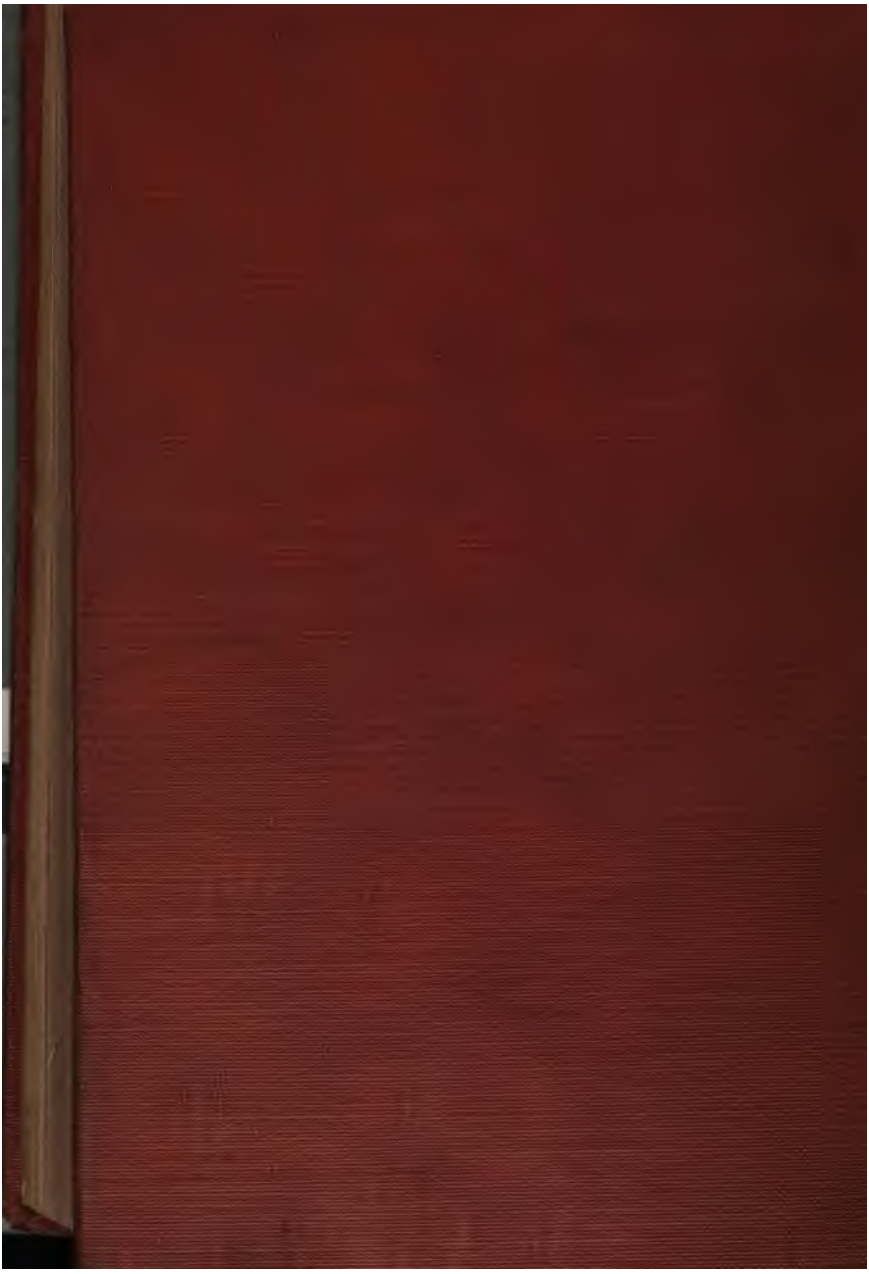
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